

April 30 2020

“Our mission is to celebrate God’s transforming Love in Jesus, by following where Jesus’ Love is calling us to serve the community”



Ascension This Week

Was Blind But Now I See — from Fr Bill Baker

On Sunday, May 3

— All services, classes and meetings at Church of the Ascension are cancelled until May 17, 2020. We will have more information as we approach that date.

**God loves you.
No exceptions.** 
The Episcopal Church Welcomes You. www.dohio.org

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“I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, in paths they do not know I will guide them.

I will make darkness into light before them, and rugged places into plains. These are the things I will do, and I will not leave them undone.” Isaiah 42:16

In the sermon on Sunday, Cindy mentioned that people not being able to see or having scales on their eyes marks a common theme in the Bible. In the first story after creation, we hear about Adam and Eve eating the apple in the Garden and then “their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked.” In this case having their eyes opened meant unlocking the knowledge about sin.

Still others in the Bible are blind to someone else’s pain or their emotions make impossible for them to “see” clearly. There are so many ways for people to be blind or not see clearly and the Bible gives us many examples to apply to our own lives in Faith. When we read the story about the Road to Emmaus on Sunday, some of us thought, how could these guys not recognize Jesus?

We all spend parts of our lives, especially in our Faith lives, being blind or unable to see something. Think about it. Mystery is a big part of our Faith. We cannot see or know God completely right now. Our lives are constantly about God revealing something about love or God’s nature or how we are supposed to act, react and live in the world.

By eating the apple, Adam and Eve learned about the nature of sin. Some people call this the “Great Fall”. Humans were always meant to learn about sin, but before we knew about it, Adam and Eve’s eyes were closed to the knowledge of it. Isn’t this true of all knowledge? We don’t know what we know until we know it.

We constantly learn and grow. A proverb actually says, “If you are not growing, you are dying.” I believe that. So, continually having our eyes opened is part of life. Sometimes at the end of mass, someone will make reference to something I said in the sermon and they say something like, “I never knew about”

As Christians, we need to be constantly studying our Faith. That means going back to the Scriptures to learn the stories and using reference books to better understand the context and meaning of some of the parables, characters and lessons contained in the Bible. If you are reading more during this quarantine, consider picking up the Bible and have your eyes opened to see more clearly.

We also know from eyewitness accounts that people can witness the same event and see things very differently. Our Gospel from Easter morning gives a good example of how people might see or not see things happening in their lives. On Easter morning Mary Magdalene, in the Gospel of John, Chapter 20, went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled back.

She went no further, but instead went and told the other disciples. Peter and the Beloved Disciple, believed to be John, run to the tomb. Peter arrives first and looks in the tomb and sees the empty linen wrappings, but does not go into the tomb. Next, John comes and sees the empty linens, he sees and he believes. What does he believe? He believes what Jesus told him before he left, that he had been raised from the dead. Finally, Peter and John leave and Mary is in the garden by herself. Jesus talks to her, but it isn't until he says her name that she sees him.

How true this story is to life. First of all, you all know by now that I give the disciples a free pass about not really believing Jesus fully about the Resurrection. Who in their right mind without seeing it would believe? As far as I know, it had never happened before and we are people who, as I mentioned earlier, often need to experience or learn about something in order to believe in it.

Mary arrives first and I assume seeing the stone rolled back filled her with overwhelming emotions—fear? Excitement? She does not make it into the tomb, but goes to tell the others. Peter makes it to the tomb first and sees the linens, but his eyes are not fully opened. John arrives next, goes into the tomb, sees the empty linens and believes. Finally, Mary speaks to Jesus and when he uses her name her eyes are opened and she believes.

I could almost envision Peter and John with the other disciples debating whether or not Jesus rose from the dead, when Mary arrives to tell the rest of the story. Three followers of Jesus in the same story who experience it so drastically differently. Truly, what opens one person's eyes may not open another's.

And of course we know that strong emotions can impact our ability to see or to see clearly. Pharaohs' "hardness of heart" makes him blind to listen to both Moses and God. I can remember once, when the kids were little, something happened and I immediately started yelling and telling them that they were lying. Justin tried to calm me down and finally he said that he had already admitted what had happened. This was like 20 minutes into the conversation.

I denied that he told me the truth and finally Meagan said that the first thing Justin did was tell me the truth about what had happened. I could not believe it. My heart was so hard I didn't, or was unable to, listen. Out of anger I closed my eyes to the truth and caused my own blindness. I think this happens to us when we are really emotional—sad, angry, tired, lonely. Emotions can cloud our ability to see clearly.

Let's face, we are all constantly on the Road to Emmaus. We see some parts of our Faith clearly, but we are ignorant about other aspects. We also allow situations and our own emotions to cloud our judgement or cause temporary (and sometimes permanent) paralysis and blindness. We live to see more clearly. Pray for and search out the truth, that God will truly open the eyes of our hearts!

Blessings, Fr Bill+

Pandemic Pleasures

What are your pandemic (guilty) pleasures? Has the quarantine allowed you to dust off some old recipes and cook or bake in a way you haven't in a long time? Are you spending time putting together puzzles or have you found a new way to exercise in a chair? I know that Deacon Geri is knitting hats and scarves. What hidden talent or joy has the time unlocked for you? Please share with us some Good News about this unique time. Submit your stories to me at Wbaker@vts.edu or call me at 917-863-1516 to share your ideas for an upcoming newsletter.

Save the Date Reminders and Announcements:

We will continue with Morning Prayer and Sunday Church Services at Ascension on Facebook for at least the duration of the time that churches are closed to congregations. Please join with Fr Bill and Cindy McCloskey at 9:30am weekdays, and 10:00am on Sundays.

We should soon be hearing if we can meet in the church on May 17th. And we will let you know soon if we can hold the Saturday Prayer Service in May.

"... knowledge is not enough. Knowledge – like technology – is like a very good, very capable servant. Love is its true master. Without love, our knowledge is lifeless. In the service of love, it finds its place and purpose."



Our Pledges

While we realize that all our minds are preoccupied with the uncertainty that the Coronavirus and what it means might bring, please keep in mind that in order for there to be a church for us to return to when this period is over, we must continue to pay our bills. Please consider dropping your pledge in the mail to us.

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