

“There’s none so blind as them as will not see.” (A Yorkshire saying from the UK)

Jesus and the Religious Politicians get into a big argument over the healing of a man born blind. The core of the dispute hinges around what you chose to look at. Or you might say what “appears” important.

For the Jewish authorities, as the nation of Judah was awash with the degrading, polytheistic, violent and amoral influx of foreigners drafted from all over the place to be Roman soldiers, their job seemed to be about holding onto the faith of their fathers until this too passed. They were in a desperate straight and had to preserve the Way of being Jewish. So they looked to the laws. Laws, the 10 Commandments, the rules of Numbers and Leviticus all define Judaism in a way. So Judaism was defined by laws. Circumcision, Sabbath Observance, Food Laws, Purity Rules.

Jesus was in many ways a reactionary against this legalism. He taught that it is the Spirit of the Laws which must be followed. Love God with heart and soul and mind and strength, love your neighbour as yourself. In that way of “intention” laws become irrelevant. If you act in love the laws are barriers you will never bump into.

In the same way, worship is a matter of Spirit and Truth, not of temples and Sacrifices. God wants worshippers of spirit and truth, he told the woman at the well.

Today’s reading are all about the analogy of Sight.

Jesus heals a man born blind. He does it when he meets him, which happens to be a Sabbath.

Jesus sees an opportunity to heal and to demonstrate that God’s love trumps all the old ideas that suffering is a punishment for sin.

The Religious Politicians see it as an infringement on the Sabbath, the very core of being a faithful Jew.

It’s about what you see, or what you are blind to.

The Religious Politicians are blind to the big picture of Justice, Compassion and Redemptive Love. Jesus is blind to Laws, Rules, Traditions and the threat of foreign moral pollution.

So what do you see when you look?

Poor Samuel, King Saul’s right hand man, gets told by God to anoint a new King. This is a bad idea, he tells God. God says, Do what I tell you. So Samuel sees obedience and hope instead of prudent political risk avoidance.

Then he meets Jesse’s sons, looking for a king. He sees one bright burly, sword wielding, confidence inspiring, tall and muscled hunk after another. Each one seems a perfect piece of king-making material, but Samuel keeps getting a No from God. Finally the kid brother gets pulled in from the sheep-keeping. Skinny arms, thinks Samuel. Head too small for the crown. He makes Justin Trudeau seem like an elder statesman, Samuel reflects. That’s my man, says God!

What does Samuel see? As he looks with God’s eyes, what does he look for?

We look on bodies of strength. We look for political acumen. We look for powerful alliances. God looks for a pure heart, a readiness to learn, an attitude of trust in God’s help, rather than the

assurance of those things which, like money or armed men or large buildings can be measured, counted and kept.

And in Psalm 23. What do you see as you enter the Valley of the Shadow of Death?

Most of us see death and turn around quickly.

God sees the Lord meeting us as a shepherd, giving us everything we need, and the guidance of the One who has already died, and now lives, and so knows the way through.

Following Jesus in the Way He leads us is full of metaphorical images. The journey is not geographical.

We are asked to listen and “hear” God’s Spirit. This cannot be done with the human ear, but with the open heart and mind.

We are asked to look and see God’s way. But this cannot be done with sharp eyes or better glasses. It is done with imaginative pondering, with searching our inner lives, with glimpses of holiness. We are asked to taste and see that the Lord is good, but again this is not about tongues or 20/20 vision.

It is always easier to go for certainties and rules and authorities. It is comforting to know, for sure, what you should do. It is even better to have someone else tell you. “My old priest used to say...” “The Bishop of XYZ made a rule that...” The old BCP states...”

But like coming to a full halt at a 4 Way Stop, it is, finally, about, and *only* about, keeping hard, fast moving objects from crushing soft, little human bodies and avoiding the pain, the grief, the loss..... And our police enforce that practice, even when no one is else there, to train us for the unseen child on a bicycle.

Rules mattered to Jesus too. He was not actually blind to them. Neither was he blinded by them. And maybe the Religious Politicians were not blind to the love behind the law, but they were dazzled by fear of the destruction of their Jewish world.

For us, we must strive to “see” what blinds us, dazzles us or dulls our sight.

And we must strive to practice that inner looking, listening, tasting.

And that can only be done by silent prayer, meditation, contemplation,  
by stilling the noise within,

by worshipping in spirit and in truth,

and in caring only that God’s Will is done,

not what makes good sense,

or will make us appear successful or whatever else we crave.

To listen is to be silent.

To see is to avoid being distracted.

To be ready to hold God is to have empty hands.

To taste you must keep yourself hungry.

To follow is to be without too many plans of our own.

May God bless you with becoming these things in Lent.