

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

It's not been a long terrible winter by any means, but I admit that after a "teaser" or two of spring-like weather earlier this year, I am really, really ready for spring and summer. I crave warmth and sunshine, with abundant rain preferably at night when I'm sleeping. Now I will tell you right up front that I have had bouts with a couple types of skin cancer, with a more serious scare or two along the way. Too much direct sun can be dangerous. It can also be dangerous if you look directly into it, which of course given my propensity for taking pictures sometimes happens. Thinking of this reminds me of how all us kids were warned back when we were young: "don't look directly at the sun, you'll go blind!" Of course when there was going to be an eclipse of the sun, how could you resist?

This morning Jesus, the light of the world brings sight to "a man blind from birth." Now notice if you will how Jesus saw him, he didn't come requesting sight of Jesus, instead Jesus takes the initiative, giving sight, mercy and healing on the Sabbath. Jesus didn't look away, didn't ignore the man or pretend not to see him. Jesus sees the blind man, sees whatever hurts are inside this man blind from birth.

Jesus sees you, brothers and sisters, he sees your hurts, your losses, your sins, your weakness and frustration, he sees anger and heartache, doubt and uncertainty. Jesus sees you and he doesn't not walk past, he stops and looks intently, compassionately, mercifully at you and knows you better than you know yourself!

Jesus sees our responses, or perhaps our lack of responses, to the world around us, to those of our neighbors who are hurting, sinning, angry, hungry and afraid. Jesus sees our hardness and coldness of heart. He sees how we respond with variations of what the disciples asked him so long ago "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Pastor, if so-and-so's in trouble/hungry/addicted well he should have worked harder, should have gotten a better job, should have had health insurance, should have, would have, could have, might have done a better job picking his (or her) parents. He/she must have done something to deserve this. Of course I also hear variations of "what did I do deserve this?" or "I must have done something to deserve this."

Jesus responded to his disciples (and to us) with "No." "Neither this man sinned nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him."

God didn't cause this, God didn't want this, perhaps we made some bad decisions or choices over the years, but do we deserve what happens to us? But here's the thing my friends, God can take a bad situation and bring something out of it working powerfully even when we don't think there's a chance. And sometimes God uses you and me as his vehicle to reveal his works, his mercy, his love, as Jesus tells us "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day, night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

We are, each one of us called to do God's work while the light is in the world, and Jesus tells us "I am the light of the world." Jesus is the light by which we live, work and play, trusting only in him, not in the gods of this world, not in riches, wealth, power, not in revenge and anger and hatred. He is the light of the world, and in the Beatitudes in Matthew Jesus tells us also that we are the light of the world, that no one lights a lamp and places it under a basket, instead it's placed on a lamp stand where all in the house can see it.

You and I brothers and sisters are those in which our Lord Jesus has kindled his light, we are beacons in this world. It doesn't matter if we are hurting, angry, frustrated, fearful, because his light shines through us anyway, as imperfect and sinful as we are. We, you and I are transformed by *the* light of the world and whatever happens, terror attacks in London, bombing civilians in the Middle East, a white army veteran who kills blacks in NYC to make a statement, whatever happens, that is not us, we do not respond in kind! We are called to be better than that, to take a road less traveled, to talk with Jesus, to walk with Jesus, to act as best we can like Jesus.

As in the words of the hymn *Amazing Grace*, "I once was blind but now I see," recall also the hymn *Beautiful Savior* because we have a beautiful Savior, who has opened our eyes.

In the eyes of the world, the sophisticated, cultured and powerful so full of themselves and their privilege, they don't see us, they turn away, belittle us, make fun of us. But that's okay because the sinful reject and kill what they can't control or understand, the light of the world who gives sight to the blind put to death on Good Friday after carrying his own cross.

Jesus had to die, for you, for me, for the blind. As we worship and confess Jesus as the Son of God, we are again remade, transformed not with mud made from saliva but with his body and blood in the bread and wine, we are made a new creation, our eyes opened, sins washed away, fed with our Lord Jesus. Someday my friends when we have closed our eyes in this world for the last time we will be awakened in a new place, we will see Jesus face to face. Our eyes will be opened wide!

AMEN