

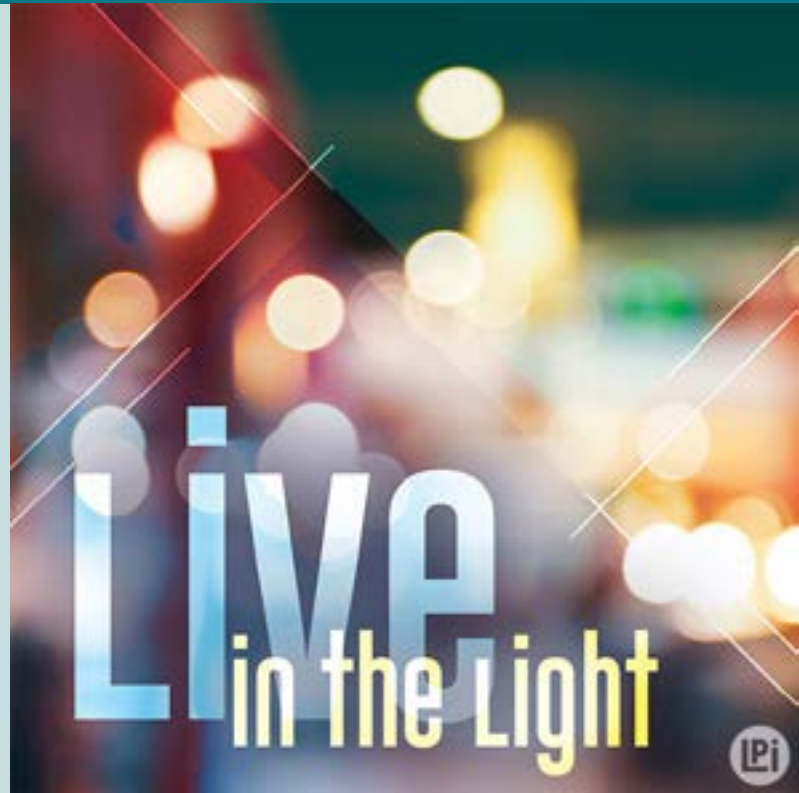
CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

4th Sunday of Lent | For Sunday, March 22, 2020

What Do You Mean I Can't See?

Written by Rev. Mark Suslenko

1 Samuel 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41



If we walk in the light of Christ, then we are able to assess the world and all of reality from God's perspective, not just a material and functional one. Holding the flashlight of truth, we are able to see beyond mere appearance and look into the heart of things. This past [Ash Wednesday, Pope Francis](#) said, "All around us, we see the dust of death. Lives reduced to ashes. Rubble, destruction, war. The lives of unwelcomed innocents, the lives of the excluded poor, the lives of the abandoned elderly. We continue to destroy ourselves, to return to ashes and dust. And how much dust there is in our relationships!" Pope Francis continued, "Look at our homes and families: Our quarrels, our inability to resolve conflicts, our unwillingness to apologize, to forgive, to start over, while at the same time insisting on our own freedom and our rights!"

The same reality of existence is before Francis' eyes and ours. How we understand, interpret, and qualify it is where the challenge lies. We all see innocents, the poor, elderly, and other marginalized people. The adjectives we use to describe them, and the rest of human experience will determine whether we are people of darkness or people of light. Just because we choose to take up some kind of Lenten discipline does not mean that we are allowing God to change and convert our hearts. After forty days of empty sacrifice, the scales may still remain on our eyes.

Often what we perceive is colored by our presuppositions, prejudices, assumptions, fears, and our needs. We judge things and people as if they are objects that are far removed from us rather than as living individuals and blessings with whom we share relationships. It is precisely this short sighted and myopic vision that leads to erroneous and hurtful judgments. But we are slow and reluctant to change. Our stubbornness continues to convince us that we are right and that our vision is perfect. How wrong we are. We cannot resolve our conflicts because we move through life with lenses of ignorance rather than lenses of clarity.

Often, we are more concerned about whether we have a good connection to social media and current affairs, than a good connection to the Gospel. Words can easily become empty and we can find ourselves spreading falsehoods

and rumors like wildfire. We can destroy a person's character in an instant and think nothing of it. We convince ourselves that ignorance, gossip, and protecting our interests is acceptable as we continue to travel the road of darkness blindly thinking we can see. And all the while the world continues to spin out of control and weep.

Shootings happen so often that they no longer impress us. School lockdowns and metal detectors are commonplace. Many are confused and struggle with their identities, many wonder whether the traditional moral voice has lost its relevance replaced by the morality of the "politically correct." We live with relativism. Sometimes it is easier to just accept this rather than standing up and "[exposing the fruitless works of darkness](#)." What does it mean to be fully and sacredly human and walk in the light of Christ?

Until we can pray, "The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want," and really mean it, not too much will change. We need to stay in the desert for a while and get our heads, hearts, and souls straight so that we can see and live in the light. Being in the desert of Lent will allow us to really ask and answer the question, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" If we can answer that question with a resounding "yes!" and truly believe that the Lord is our shepherd, then we can break through the tethers of prejudice, eradicate fear, dispel the darkness of hatred and sin, discover freedom, live in peace, work for justice, be effective stewards of creation, assist the migrant and the immigrant, and safeguard our economic systems and policies so that they truly serve all of God's children. There will no longer be a question of whether life is sacred. We will know from Whom it comes, to Whom it belongs and to Whom it returns.

There are no easy answers to life's staggering dilemmas. However, when we live as children of the light, as children who have been blessed with the gift of faith, we will produce every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. It certainly stands to reason that where there is goodness, righteousness and truth, there is God. As simple people of simple means let us ask ourselves a profound question: Where in our lives do we find goodness, righteousness, and truth? When we gain an answer, we would be wise to focus our energy there and pursue it. Doing so will lead us from blindness to sight.

PRAYER

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
with your rod and your staff that give me courage.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
for years to come.
Amen.

Pope Francis is correct. There is dust everywhere! It is covering our relationships, our vision, our understanding, our minds, our hearts, our wills, and our souls. Many suffer from spiritual cataracts and are not even aware of it. In fact, they staunchly believe that they see just fine! Will we recognize that we do not see clearly and reach for the remedy, or will our stubbornness and fierce independence lead us to reject the light and become truly blind?

We all come to God by different paths. But in all our journeys is the need to be healed from blindness and brought into clear sight. We all struggle with cataracts that affect our spiritual vision in different ways. However blurred our vision may be, what is required is a huge dose of humility that allows us to understand and accept that we do not see as clearly as we may think. This may be regarding world social issues, personal and professional relationships, relationships with authority, or even the stranger we meet on the street. The adjectives we use to describe what we see can reveal just how blind we may be. We can never presume that we have clear sight and must always strive to gaze into the heart of people and things as God does. Lord Jesus, touch the eyes of my soul so that I may truly see!

Rev. Mark Suslenko