

March 22, 2020

John 9: 1-11

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“Unblinded By the Light”

A couple of evenings ago I watched a report on a local news station that highlighted the idea of what was referred to as “upgrading” ourselves. The idea is that the present Covid-19 crisis gives us the opportunity to focus on our lives in ways we usually don’t and that we can see this as a time to “upgrade.” . The article was actually written 6 or 7 years ago by a career coach (Lisa Quast) and in her writing she suggests that we think of our lives as if they are a product and we should be intentional about improving ourselves, making the product better. What the report on the television was suggesting is that with all of this social distancing we have the time for a personal “upgrade.”

Friends, I’m not opposed to self-improvement and there is always room to better one’s self but something about the idea of thinking of ourselves as a product we should upgrade feels strange. With so much of our usual routine not happening right now, and with events and schedules being cancelled, we do have more time to reflect. But what’s been going through my mind is not how I can upgrade myself but how much I miss you. This is really challenging, what we are going through, and I think it’s hard to focus on upgrading ourselves when we are so aware of what we’ve lost, at least temporarily. And so, I’m not thinking about me. I’m thinking about you and how I miss our being together.

What we’re living through helps us relate to the story of Jesus and the blind man. The bible says the man was blind from birth. This is a way of saying what the man was dealing with could not be overcome. This was his lot in life. There was no possibility that he could upgrade himself. What we also know about the world at that time is that the man’s blindness impacted more than just his physical sight. He was a beggar, cut off from others, de-valued because of his imperfection, and even the religious community assumed he suffered because of his sin or some sin in his family. In other words, many were thinking, “He got what he deserved.” Well, Jesus didn’t see it that way and this is why the gospel is good news. When Jesus shows up everything changes. The man who was blind sees. The man who was untouchable in his culture is physically brought near to Jesus. There was a whole system of social distancing in that day. Jesus bridged the distance. And so, for the man whose life was defined by his blindness there was hope becomes an experience of healing when Jesus is involved.

Instead of seeing the shift in our schedules as just an opportunity to self-improve why not look for the ways our life with Jesus is working a change in us. In one way or another, all of us are blind. We don’t see all God wants to see. Again, this is about more than physical blindness. When we hear the story from a spiritual point of view there’s a light that begins to shine. John’s gospel repeatedly points to the truth that Jesus is the Light of the World. This is what is written in the beginning of John’s Gospel, the light shines in the darkness. When Jesus entered into the blind man’s life, he reached out into the man’s darkness, touching his eyes, and it opened a new way for him. I’m not sure the pandemic will bring the opportunity to upgrade our lives but I know Jesus can deepen our faith, even through this struggle. We are following the guidance of our leaders and medical professionals. It is important that we socially distance ourselves whenever possible. It feels heavy and a bit dark as we do this but Jesus is with us to remind us that no crisis can ever cancel out the light of the world.

Look again at the image for our message for today. Where are you experiencing the touch of Christ? How is Jesus present to you where you are? Is there any darkness in your life? God’s light is shining and I invite a couple of my colleagues to return and share some ways our congregation is reflecting Christ’s light into the world.