

Rev. Larry Brown - Powell United Methodist Church

“The Vision of Transition”

How far can you see into the future? When you really focus; when you look as far as you can; when all your attention and visual energy is pointed in the direction of what’s coming next; how far can you see into the future? It wasn’t long ago that I went to my eye doctor for a checkup of my contact lenses. You know what that is like. I was sitting in the exam chair and looking across the room at letters and numbers projected on the wall. The doctor asked, “Which is better, 1 or 2? Is it A or B? And now,” he would say, “is it this one or this one?” I asked my doctor what he is measuring when he asks those questions. He told me the different lens choices help to get at the best acuity. That’s what it’s called “acuity,” the sharpest and best image possible. The measurements are standardized at 20 feet. 20/20 vision is what we call it when things look perfect at that distance. In the conversation I was having with the doctor, I foolishly asked, “So the distance from the chair to the wall is 20 feet?” And of course it’s not, if I had thought for a moment I would have realized that the examination room isn’t long and narrow. “No,” he said, “you are looking at a mirror that is 10 feet away. The image is on the wall behind you, 10 feet plus 10 feet gets us to the 20 feet we need without having such an oddly shaped room.” This makes perfect sense but it also points to the fact that sometimes what you’re looking at isn’t exactly what you think you are seeing. I’ll leave this for another day except to say that a good dose of humility may be helpful when we think we see things so clearly. There may be another point of view that is worth considering, but like I say, I’ll save that for another day. I’m glad to report that my eye doctor visit and new lenses have improved my vision. But no lens, no vision correction anywhere or of any kind, can help us see into the future. We can be made to see the “o” or “p” or “3” or “5” on the wall but we’ll never get 20/20 vision regarding what’s about to happen. We’re all blind in that regard.

Our nation is very near election day and the selection of a president. Political pollsters and pundits would love to be able to see into the future and tell us what is going to happen but the best they can do is predict, and we know from experience that projections of election outcomes are always hit and miss. No one can see the future with absolute clarity, that is unless you are a man called Moses and standing with God on a mountain at the edge of the River Jordan. We read today from the Book of Deuteronomy, which brings to a close the stories of Moses, the great biblical leader and prophet, who guided the Hebrew people on their 40 year long wilderness journey out of slavery in Egypt and to the Promised Land. The 34th chapter in Deuteronomy closes the book on Moses because he dies there, on this side of the river, looking out over the land that God has promised, and knowing he will not step foot onto that ground himself. This is a dramatic scene, Moses standing on that high place and looking over, hearing God’s voice say, “This is it, Moses. You’ve brought the people to the edge of the promise. They are going to make it but this is the end of the road for you.” I wonder how he felt about that. Was he resentful? Did he have regrets? Did he complain that it wasn’t fair to have come all this way only to be denied the prize? We have no way of knowing exactly how he felt but the bible does give us a clue about what was going on in Moses’ heart and soul. As he stood on the mountain the bible says, “his sight was unimpaired and his vigor [his strength] had not abated.” (Deut. 34:7) The narrative does not want us to pity Moses, even as he dies there short of the Promised Land. The vision Moses possessed and the strength that pulsed through his body was more spiritual than physical. Moses saw and felt on the last day of his life what he saw and felt the day God first called him to lead God’s people. God would be with him. God would be his strength at the places when he was weak. God would show him the way when he couldn’t see the pathway forward. God’s promise to Moses had always been fulfilled, and even when he breathed his last on this side of the Jordan he knew God’s faithfulness would never die. The vision and strength to trust God in the past, in the present, and in the future is the legacy Moses has left to us.

We can’t see the future but with eyes of faith we can see that God’s faithfulness will never leave us. There is a strength that comes through our faith that keeps us standing, even when we don’t know exactly what is coming. Among many things given to us in our life with Jesus, we are given a vision that is unimpaired and strength that does not fade. There are many who are worried about what will happen after Election Day, no matter which candidate wins the vote. From where we sit today none of us know exactly what the future holds, but as the saying goes, “We know who holds the future.” Because of the nature of ministry I’ve had the opportunity to be with many persons in their final days. So many times it has been a blessing to witness how their spirits become stronger even as their bodies grow weaker. This is what happens when Christ leads the way, and it happens not only at the end of life but in every circumstance of life when we transition from where we are today to where life will take us tomorrow. We see a God who is always faithful. We see that we are not alone. We see, with incredible acuity, that the promise of God is there for us, and what we see gives us strength to remain firm in this faith.

This week open your eyes of faith wide. Is there a decision in front of you this week? Is there some way you must go but you are not sure what it will mean or what will happen? Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory

and grace. We always have a choice. One is a lens that only sees anxiety, worry and fear. The other sees God's faithfulness and love. In the days to come, which will we choose? May God give us vision and strength this day, and in all the days to come. Amen.