



Light

(3rd in the Lenten sermon series "Journey to Easter")

I Samuel 16:1-3, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41

Fourth Sunday in Lent, Sunday, March 22nd, 2020

First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois

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Text: Live as children of light... (Ephesians 5:8b)

I once was blind but now I see.

"Whose fault is it?" We try to find fault, don't we, when bad things happen. We want someone to blame.

Years ago I spent Wednesday afternoons with a syndicated political cartoonist who possessed a sardonic Mark Twain-like wit. Driving home from work one rainy night on a rural blacktop county road he lost control of his small pick-up truck. The truck rolled over and he was thrown out of the cab. He remembered waking up to raindrops falling on his face. When he tried to wipe the rain from his face his arms wouldn't move. It was like a bad dream, no, a nightmare. He lay in that field until morning when someone saw the truck and found him. He spent months in the hospital before going home, a permanent quadriplegic.

At first he had a lot of visitors. Many brought someone who they knew would be able to pray the man back to wholeness. Other visitors wanted to know how the accident happened. Was he speeding, going too fast for conditions? Had he been drinking? He once told me that he came to believe they were just trying to assure themselves that they could make themselves immune to what happened to him. But, he said with a wry smile, no one is immune from bad things.

"Whose fault was it that this man was born blind? His or his parents?" the disciples asked Jesus. "Who sinned?". "No one", Jesus replied. It just is. But can you see the light of God's glory in the darkness of the blind? Seeing the light of God's glory in the darkness of fear and uncertainty isn't easy.

We see this truth in the story of the prophet Samuel, called upon by God to anoint King Saul's successor. Saul was morally challenged, selfish, and corrupt. Apples do not fall far from trees, as the saying goes, and Saul's sons were no better than he was.

God instructed Samuel to go to the home of a farmer and sheep breeder named Jesse who lived near Bethlehem. One of Jesse's sons would be anointed king. Now doing the Lord's bidding was going to take a bit of subterfuge for the prophet Samuel's visit was an act of sedition. In other words, King Saul would be none too happy. Under the veil of a half-truth Samuel told Saul that he needed to offer a sacrifice in Bethlehem.

His appearance in Bethlehem caused quite a stir. The elders asked Samuel if he came in peace or not. "Peace," Samuel said. "I came to offer a sacrifice and to sanctify you." Samuel invited Jesse and his to the sacrifice.

When Jesse and his sons appeared Samuel thought to himself, "Ah, Eliab, Jesse's oldest boy looks like a leader. Surely he's the one God intends me to anoint." But no. God said to Samuel, "Do not be deceived by his appearance. He is good looking and tall, but I do not judge by outward appearances. I look to a person's heart."

And so it was with each of Jesse's seven sons who accompanied him to the sacrifice. "Do you have no more sons?" Samuel asked. "I have one; he's the youngest. He's watching the sheep." "Send for him."

This youngest son, David by name, was a good looking boy, ruddy in complexion, beautiful eyes, and handsome in a certain way. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Arise, this is the one. Anoint him."

Now it must be said that David was far from perfect but he was a man of God's own heart. God doesn't ask for perfection. God asks for our hearts.

We are living in a time of frayed nerves and fear and uncertainty as the coronavirus sets up a whole new way of living. Churches, schools, businesses, and community's are learning new ways of living, of staying connected. In a time such as this it is good remind ourselves of the words found in today's lesson from Ephesians. Live as children of light."

As Christ is the light of the world so - the visible and living body of Christ - are to be a light shining in the darkest of times. Since its earliest days the Church has taken great risks to do the work of God's Kingdom among the broken, the least, the last, the lost, the forsaken, and the forgotten. We are called, we are challenged to be children of light. Awake, O sleeper, Arise from the dead and Christ's light will shine upon you; and through you.

To God be the glory. Amen.