

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world that THOSE WHO DO NOT SEE MAY SEE.
AND THOSE WHO SEE MAY BECOME BLIND.”

- These words taken from Verse 39 of our Gospel reading.

I earlier mentioned that today’s message is about sight.

- And just like last week with water, sight can be taken at 2 levels.

Sight—as it is normally thought of on a more elementary level.

- That is, physical sight.
- How well do you see, as in, do you need glasses?

But sight can also be taken at a deeper, spiritual level.

- That is, seeing through the eyes of faith.

It is interesting that these 2 levels of sight seem to go in opposite directions as we mature.

- For most of us, as we grow older, our eye sight decreases.
- We hear statements like, “I used to be able to read that but not anymore.”

But with the eyesight of faith.....

- As we grow in spiritual maturity, or faith, our eyes of faith also increases.

And so with all that, I ask you a question which does form the basis for our meditation here this morning.

- “What do YOU see?”
- I further introduce all this with a story to illustrate these points.

There was a house that was being sold out of an estate.

- It had not been kept up.
- It was not in very good shape and the family just wanted to get rid of it. Get it off their hands.

So they decided to have an auction and sell it. Highest bidder gets the house, where is-as is, and they are done with it.

- And because of their desire just to get rid of it so quickly.....
- There would be only one day for viewing/going through the house and then the next day would be the auction.

Now the house did have potential.....mostly as a fixer-upper.

- Potential for folks that did those sorts of things; flip the house so to speak.

Now all of this took place in a small town.

- And as such, there were 3 redevelopers, rehabbers, or flippers.....whatever you wanted to call them in the town.
- They were all of equal resources and skill levels.

The time for viewing the house was set for the one day only.

- From 10:00 in the morning to 10:00 at night; even though the power had been turned off and there was no available lighting in the house for after dark.

All 3 of the contractors would want to see the house and potentially bid on it the next day.

- The timing worked out well for 2 of the contractors.
- They were able to get into the house, look it over during the daylight and do all the evaluation they needed.

But the third contractor had to be out of town that day.

- Short notice had been given for all this and he could not reschedule things to be in town.....until late in the evening.
- He also did see the house but it was not until after dark, around 9:00 that night.

The next day came for the auction of the house and property.

- All 3 contractors showed up.
- Promptly at 10:00 the auction and bidding started.

Soon the contractor who had only been able to see the house late at night backed out.

- His comment, it was dark when I got to the house....and he really didn't get a good chance to see it.
- He had no idea what it is worth. Literally "He was in the dark." He said, "I'm not risking it."

The second contractor also soon backed out.

- He said, "I've seen the house and it is a mess."
- The cost to fix it up, and the little potential it has for resale at a good price....I'm just not taking the risk.

The third contractor was really excited.

- You see, he saw great potential in the house and really wanted it.
- And he did buy it at a low price.

Fast forward.

- The third contractor did fix it up and sold it at a high value.
- It turned out to be a good investment and he made a great profit from it.

So again I ask you, "What do YOU see?"

- As we consider that question in terms of life and the world....our answers may be similar to the experience of the 3 contractors.

We all face and must contend with many problems.

- We live in a broken, sinful world.
- And we see sickness, broken relationships, theft, getting taken advantage of, conflicts, wars, and even death.

And as we live and face these things.....what do you see?

- For some who was like the contractor who could only view the house at night, they live in darkness.
- They get all caught up in the evil of the world and see no way out.
- They stumble in darkness and see no value.
- They only see death and destruction and brokenness.

Living and influenced by the evil and darkness of this world, they have no light, no hope.

- Tragically they miss the light Christ brings into the world and how He can take us even in our darkness to fix us up that we have great value.
- They miss seeing God, what He has done, and His help for them.

For others, they see the world as the contractor who seen the house but saw no value in it.

- So he did not bid.

That is, their eyes of faith are very dim.

- They have trouble seeing Jesus and His love, His mercy, and His forgiveness.
- Instead, they live in despair and distress.
- Life seems out of control and they want no part of it.

And for some, they are like the contractor who could see the value and wanted the home.

- It was the same house as the other 2 contractors saw.....but the third contractor saw more to it than the other 2 saw.

For those in this group, they face all the struggles and challenges of the other 2 groups but there is a difference.

- They have an inner peace and joy that allows them to continue on.
- They see God who remains in control.....
- Who loves them and will provide and care for them.
- They see a God who forgives their sins and gives them great value as a child of God.
- They see a God who has prepared a future, far better home for them that has no end.
- They see hope.

So again I ask you, "What do YOU see?"

- Probably for each of us, we, like the father Jesus first met when He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration say, "I believe, help my unbelief."
- That is, I want/need better eye sight.
- I want that peace and joy and confidence that you talk about.
- I want to see God in control.....when I see my life spinning out of control.

And if that describes you, I have very good news for you.

- Look first at our Old Testament reading for today.
- It starts quite ominous.
- Almost like a house with no value.

- It looks like it describes that black, dark world that we sometimes see.

Hear again the first 2 verses of our Old Testament reading.

- This is God who is speaking.
- For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant. I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools.
- Ouch, not good.

But then it all changes so quickly. It is like the house has been fixed up. Hear the comforting assurance of deliverance God gives to us in the very next verse after what I just read to you.

- Verse 16.
- And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.
- Though the people are spiritually blind, God would not forsake them.
- He will make darkness light for them and crooked paths straight for them.

So how do we get this sight?

- I described earlier as we grow in spiritual maturity, we grow stronger in our eyes of faith.

How do we do all that?

- The answer to this is given ever so eloquently to us in our Gospel reading today.
- The account of a man born physically and spiritually blind that Jesus gives eyesight to—both physically and spiritually.
- In this account, the physical and spiritual eyesight he receives, can be paralleled to our eyesight of our faith being received and strengthened.

As I had mentioned, the man was born physically blind.

- Are we not also born spiritually blind, without faith?
- By our inherited sinful nature, an enemy of God.

And Jesus gave to the man sight.

- But the way He did that seems very unusual. But it gives to us much meaning and tells us much.
- We are told Jesus spit on the ground and made mud.

- Then He put the mud over the man's eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam.

So the man went and washed and came back seeing.

- And is that not the way it is with our eyes of faith?
- Jesus created us. He formed man from the dust of the ground.
- And then we were washed in the waters of Holy Baptism and made children of God.
- Given the eyesight of faith.
- We came up out of the water able to see.

But remember I said we want our eyesight of faith to continue to get stronger.

- We see this illustrated well in our Gospel account in the maturing faith of the man who was given his sight.
- Conversely, the blindness of the Pharisees.

The formerly blind man was brought to the Pharisees.

- The formerly blind man identifies Jesus as a "remarkable man."
- The Pharisees describe Jesus as not from God. They say He is a sinner.

The Pharisees continue their questioning later. This time they ask the formerly blind man who did this? Who gave you your sight?

- And this time the man describes Jesus as a prophet.
- Do you see the eyesight of faith strengthening?
- And the Pharisees say, this man Jesus, is a sinner.

Some time later Jesus found the formerly blind man and Jesus teaches and informs him that He is the Son of man.

- And the man formerly blind says to Jesus.....
- "Lord I believe".....and he worshipped Him.
- Jesus said to the man, "I am the Light of the World."

And then He says those words that pulls all this together for us.

- They are the words I opened this message with.
- "For judgment I came into this world so that THOSE WHO DO NOT SEE MAY SEE and those who see may become blind."

So again I ask you, What do YOU see?

- Some may say, “Pastor, sometimes my eyesight of faith is better and clearer than at other times.
- Pastor, I get what you are saying but sometimes in the valleys of my life, my eyes of faith don’t see too clearly.
- My eyesight of faith may be improving; but I have days that my eyes don’t work too good!

There was a nature lover who went to see the picturesque Young frau (Jungfrau) mountain.

- It is the 13,642 foot main summit of the Bernese Alps.
- When he reached the point for the scenic view, there was mist and fog. He could not see the mountain.

So he waited.

- The next day it was the same thing.
- People continued to tell him it was there but he couldn’t see it.

The next day the mist and fog had cleared away and he could see the mountain.

- It was spectacular.
- It was everything he had been told.

The next day when he went to leave, visibility was again poor.....but he knew it was there.

- So it is with our eyes of faith.
- In those times of discouragement and despair, when our vision is impaired we can still know that God is there.
- You have seen and can be certain of that.
- Our Scripture reading chosen for this week, posted outside the church office door says, “For we walk by faith and not by sight.” Second Corinthians chapter 5 verse seven.

Dear Christian friends.....for the last time I ask you in this message, “What do YOU see?”

- My prayer is that Jesus will bring you out of the darkness into His marvelous light.
- And in that shining light you will more and more each day grow in the eyesight of faith and see a loving and merciful God who loves you, cares for you, and does what is best for you.
- More and more each day you will see a loving and merciful God who even in the midst of trials and calamities and struggles, has won for you salvation.
- And one day, you will see that magnificent home that God has prepared for you, that is beyond anything you can imagine.
- The eyesight of faith will be perfect when you are face to face with God. Amen.Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.