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John 9:1-41  
4 Lent A  
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." Good versus evil. Light versus the darkness. This is a strong theme in The Gospel According to John. A few weeks ago I agreed very much with this on a literal level. Our dark winter was slowly giving way to light and a higher rising sun. It was still light out at 6:00 p.m! But just last Sunday as we entered Daylight Savings Time the light came on with full force. My eyes are still squinting. My circadian rhythm is all out of whack. Enough with the evening sunlight! Give me a few weeks and I'll get over this, but I could use another hour of darkness in the evening. Maybe here in mid-March you can relate. Things are not always as they appear.

Just as the later evening light this last week does not feel good to me, and I'd prefer, at least for now, more darkness, perhaps similarly seeing and blindness are not always so easy to pin down and don't always fall into our tidy presumed categories of good and bad.

For Jesus concludes our story with a confusing statement meant for the Pharisees that can apply to anyone: "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains." And right before this he makes a similar statement, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." What in the world?

For some people, "seeing" means knowing with certainty. They know without a doubt what is good, what is evil, who the sinners are, and who are the righteous. The Pharisees of this story are an easy example. They are absolutely certain that Jesus was a sinner because it was on the sabbath that he healed the man born blind. Working on the sabbath was a sure indication of sin, perhaps just like dancing was the activity of the devil in the old movie, "Footloose!" If you worked on the sabbath, even if you healed someone and turned their life around, you

were still on the dark side, estranged from God, unashamedly flaunting your rebellion from the Law of God. They even wondered if Jesus' unrepentance was a sign of demon possession. The Pharisees saw clearly what was going on here. Clear as the light of day.

For Jesus, that sort of seeing is actually blindness. A seeing that hones in on what the Pharisees presume to be the dark shameful sins of others, while neglecting to see the love of God in action. What they call dark, Jesus calls light. What they think of as God, Jesus shines a bright light on and reveals it to be false idol.

We all have our idols that shade God's light from us. I dare say our favorite idol is our own individual selves. Rather than letting God be God we take extreme measures to place ourselves in God's position. The power and control is addicting. Our act of judging others gives us a sense of elevation above our problems and limitations. We have an idea what God's Law is, and we use it to climb higher above others, thinking we're getting closer to God's position while trampling down upon those we feel are disobedient. The idol of the self -- the idol that claims it can see just like God -- just won't stop. And it causes all sorts of problems. All sorts of people get hurt, along with God's creation.

Jesus "came into this world," as he says, "for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." He works to take away our false seeing, our knowing with certainty, our placing ourselves in the spotlight like God. For it is in those distorted moments when we are the most lost. It's hard to have faith when you are certain.

Jesus' story culminates in his death at the hands of those who thought they could see, and is followed up by God's new action of resurrection. This pattern of crucifixion and resurrection extends to us. Jesus makes us blind to our false certainties and beliefs. And Jesus gives us sight as we are resurrected and reborn children of God. As Paul says in Romans 6, "We know that our old self was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. . . So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." *I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.*

Christ will restore your sight. But what will you then be able to see?

Perhaps you'll see God in majesty and power, something like a Book of Revelation's vision: A new heaven and a new earth, the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And in that vision, perhaps you'll hear the loud voice from the throne, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Or perhaps with your restored sight you'll see God's creation from the perspective of Genesis 1: in its good original state, as God intended. Each piece of creation doing its part, each item of creation blessed by God as good.

Or perhaps you'll see your fellow humans as unique children of God, made in God's image, brimming with gifts and talents. Perhaps you'll see them like the Apostle Paul from Galatians: *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*

Jesus restores your sight to a state of faith in Christ. You see God for who God is. Not as a threat to you, but as the giver of life, the one who blesses. And you see your neighbor not as an object of judgment; but as friend, as a forgiven child of God just like you.

May this new sight of yours testify right along with the man formerly blind: "I believe!"

Amen.