

Where is the Light?

Message by Mary Powers 3-30-25

Reading I: 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a – anointing David

How does the story of Samuel anointing David tie into this message, “Where is the Light?”? Expect the unexpected from God, David was just a teenager when Samuel came and found out that this kid was God’s chosen. He didn’t understand it, but he listened to God. He found the light of Israel in an unexpected place. Maybe we need to listen to God even when we think what He is telling us seems a little bit crazy.

Gospel: John 9:1-7, 13-16, 24-25

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.” Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”

Prayer for Spiritual Sight:

"Dear Lord, we read today that Jesus heals the man born blind and reveals himself to him as the Son of Man. The story of the healing of the man born blind invites us to consider the importance of sight, both physical and spiritual. The blind man is given physical sight, but he is also granted spiritual insight about the person of Jesus. Lord, Grant us spiritual insight to grow in our journey to be more like you."

Reading II: Ephesians 5:8-9 –

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light, for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth...

Light – I have been thinking a lot about light recently. And somehow it keeps coming up. We light candles at every church service. We talked about light at our ONA confirmation service. Pastor John and Joe both referred to the light. The poster on the back window says “Be the Light”. We sang “This Little Light of mine” twice in the past few weeks. And

then, at Wednesday's prayer gathering, guess what scripture Kim chose to share? This one about the blind man! So, somehow, I feel like I am supposed to talk about light.

I think I can safely say, we all appreciate light. Especially us Michiganders, who sometimes don't see the sunlight for days or weeks in the winter. When it does appear, it just brightens your whole day, doesn't it? Light is warm, comforting, brings us joy. We enjoy sunlight, firelight, candlelight, even starlight.

Now I will admit there are times when it is not so welcome. When my grandson has a sleepover at Nana's and he comes in at 6 am and turns on the light above my head...But MOST of the time, we love the light.

Jesus said in this passage about healing the blind man, "I am the light of the world." And while He walked this earth, He spread that light to all those he met. He brought light to a man who had never seen the light, a man who was blind from birth. Can you imagine what he may have felt, seeing light for the first time? Wow. And Jesus gave him, not just the radiance of physical light, but the gift of spiritual light. The man believed in Jesus as the Son of God and became his disciple. He testified about Jesus, even to the Pharisees. He helped spread Jesus' light.

Because we are believers also, Jesus light is shared with us. His light should shine within us, so much so that we can't help but share it with others.

But—we don't. "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine..." but do we? One verse says "Hide it under a bush? Oh no, I'm gonna let it shine."

But how? How do we let our light shine? Well, To be a light to others means to inspire and uplift them through your actions, words, and character, shining kindness and compassion in a way that encourages them to see the best in themselves and the world.

We can share the light when we do any act of kindness. I remember when I was at Kroger one day and a woman was going out the door with one of those candy bar bouquets they make at Valentine's – and the whole thing spilled on the floor, candy bars everywhere. So, I stopped and helped her pick them up. She said to me, "You don't know how much this means to me. I have had a really bad day and you just made it better."

Encourage others. Sometimes there are people we know who feel like no matter what they do it doesn't seem to make a difference. I talked to someone just the other day who felt that way. But I told her to keep doing what she is doing. That her efforts do matter, and sometimes we have to remember we are working in God's time not ours. Let others know they matter. I appreciate the encouragement that Shirley and Kim gave to my husband Joe recently as he struggles with his health issues. Just a smile and a kind word can brighten someone's outlook.

Be a good listener. Sometimes that is all people need, someone to really listen. We all know people who don't really listen. You can tell they are just waiting for their turn to say what is on their mind.

And while we are talking about listening,-- Have I lost you yet? How many of you find your minds wandering all ready this morning/ Oh I know because I do the same thing. You find

yourself thinking about what you are going to eat for lunch or all the stuff you have to get done this week. And you miss the message. Well, come on, stick with me!

We know there are lots of ways we as individuals can be a light to others, in many small ways. And I am sure we all do these things.

But what about us as a church? --How can this church family be a collective light here on the corner of Belsay and Perry? How can we be sure this community knows who we are and what we stand for?

When I joined this church 30+ years ago, one of the things that attracted me was the dedication to service in the community. At the time we were building a Habitat House, pretty much all by ourselves. When Pastor Roger was here, we had "Jesus has left the building" when we went out and served our community several times a year. We had the Upward program that provided a great service to the families in this community. That is what a church is supposed to be. That is what it means to be disciples. That is what Pastor John felt was missing here now.

I know. We are old. Most of us are well past 60. and it is easy to say "I did my part when I was younger. I was a deacon, I served on the Board, I was head of that committee, I am old and tired, It is someone else's turn." Believe me, I have felt the same way many times. But one thing Pastor John was right about. WE can't be done because God is not done. We are still here because God has a mission for us. I think we have shut our ears and hearts to his voice. It is easier to just sit here on Sunday mornings and enjoy each others company at Dinners Night out, than to have to actually go out side these walls, these comfortable groups, and spread the light of Jesus where it is needed. How do we do that today, with this congregation?

We always say we are a welcoming church. And when people find there way into this building, we do welcome them. But that welcome starts and ends at the door. We have to get that welcome out there, beyond these walls, to the people who need to feel it.

Jesus said in today's gospel "I am the light of the world". He brought both physical and spiritual light to the blind man. We need his light to shine to day in this crazy upside down world we are living, where groups of people are being targeted.

We live in uncertain and anxious times. There are neighbors who aren't sure if they are safe, if they will lose their jobs and be unable to take care of their families, if they will be kept from full participation in our society because of their gender or who they love or their race or country of origin. They want and need the light of God's hope and love to shine on them. They want and need to know that they have allies here. And that won't happen without US. What are we doing to let them know we are a safe place, that they are welcome here, that we will stand by them and with them? Do we care? I hope and pray that we do.

We have an Open and Affirming covenant and signs on our doors, and our statement on our website, and that is great. But it is just a start. There are some actions I have in mind

for us to take to reach out to those marginalized communities. We need to make this welcome visible beyond this corner of Grand Blanc.

So what can we do? And I am talking about myself here too. What have I done to reach out past these walls, to share God's light in the name of our church? Not as much as I could or should.

The woman who helped shelter Ann Frank and her family during WWII said"

"But even an ordinary secretary or a housewife or a teenager can, within their own small ways, turn on a small light in a dark room" - Miep Gies

Even a bunch of senior citizens can, too.

We have lots of good minds and hearts sitting here. You know, I am a teacher, once a teacher always a teacher, so I have some homework for you.

Be a disciple, Be the light – this week, pray about and think about new ways we as individuals and as a church family can be better disciples. Even if the idea seems crazy or impossible. Just like Samuel, who listened to God's voice and anointed David, even though he thought it was a crazy idea. Listen to God's voice. Share those ideas. I am going to put a basket at the back to collect your ideas. I hope I don't find it empty at the end of service next week. And this isn't primarily about getting more people in this sanctuary every Sunday. That would be a nice outcome, but that is not the goal. The goal is simply to bring God's light to our neighbors, then see what God does with it. Let's make Christ's light shine so brightly here at the corner of Belsay and Perry that it will attract those in need of God's love. Let's work together to be disciples. Let's work together to share the light of Christ.. I have faith in us.

"The Hill We Climb" Amanda Gorman

the new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.