

Blind Love – Blind Faith

The message of today's lessons is difficult to miss, which is kind of ironic and very appropriate considering the fact that it's all about blindness and not seeing things the way God sees them. Consider the events recorded in the Gospel lesson (which are taking place just a couple of days before Palm Sunday). This is important to understand because the apostles, who are leading this procession into town, stirring up the crowd and announcing Jesus' arrival, have been with Jesus for the last three years. If anyone knows Him the best, *it should be them*. And yet... out of everyone lining that road—disciples included—the blind man is the **only** one who *truly* recognizes Jesus for who He *really* is—the promised Son of David, the Messiah in the flesh. Nobody else, including the apostles, saw Jesus the way the faithful blind guy saw Jesus; seeing Him with a faith that could only come about through hearing; hearing the Word of Christ. Once again, you can't help but hear the words of our heavenly Father, which He spoke at the Transfiguration: "*This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him.*" It really is that simple: The blind guy "saw" Jesus so clearly **because he listened to Jesus**. And then there's our OT lesson. God makes it very clear in our OT lesson that He doesn't see things the way man sees things. Man looks at the outer shell, *but God sees the heart*. We see this in spades with little runt David being chosen as Israel's king over the much better choices that were his older brothers. God doesn't see things the way man sees things. *Not exactly a deep mystery that needs explaining, is it?*

Here's the thing: We could *easily* turn this into a sermon on how we are guilty of all the very things these lessons teach against. We could have a month of sermons on the OT text alone; on how God doesn't see things the way man sees things. We could have a month of sermons on how God sees the heart, but we instead look to outer things to determine if a person is good and faithful and "worthy" or not; if God is pleased or not. How much mileage could we get out of the simple message of seeing Jesus and crying out to Jesus and holding fast to Jesus *in the certainty and assurance of blind faith?* Just think of all that has transpired over these past several months, how so many "good Christians" have not seen the Lord in their midst, right where He has promised to be. Just think about how much **rebuke** has been directed towards faithful Christians these past several months for daring to worship in person or sing hymns or *—gasp!*— receive Holy Communion in person, especially by means of the common cup. It's so sadly ironic too. Those who don't see Christ (or refuse to see Christ) rail against and rebuke and snort in derision, "*Are you blind!? Can't you see the deadly risk you're facing?! Don't you care that people will die if you do such a heartless and stupid thing?!*" We could preach on all this (and we wouldn't be wrong in the assessment), but we're not going to do that. Why? Because it ultimately puts all the focus on the wrong things.

Let's put the focus on Almighty God. The reason is simple. **God** is the One who gives the gift of faith to the blind man so that he is able to so clearly see and know Jesus even when everybody else doesn't. **God** is the One who sees the heart. **God** is the One who doesn't see things the way man sees things. God is the One who gives us the gift of faith so that we can see Christ and His means of grace so clearly, even in the midst of the darkness; even in the midst of the fog of war. He gives us the gift of faith so that we don't see things the way man, in all his fear and arrogance and false wisdom (which is only foolishness), sees things.

Case in point: Behold! (*Listen and you will see. Faith comes through hearing!*) The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! In faith, through faith, it's not even a question, is it? It's fact. It's glorious, comforting Christ-centered fact. Even in the midst of all the fear and darkness and blindness and sickness and anger, here is God's promise of redemption, in the flesh. Look to this cross. ***Faith just sees things differently.*** Faith sees what the flesh, blinded by sin, is unable to see. Here is God's wrath against your sin, my sin, and all sin...in the flesh. More importantly, here is your victory, your peace, and your salvation, and He's beaten, bloodied, and nailed to a tree to die for you in your place. Here is perfect obedience, perfect humility, and perfect love.

And the fact that today is Valentine's Day—the day we celebrate “love”—isn't lost on me. Look to this cross. ***Here is a true and perfect “blind love.”*** Hallmark will ***never*** be able to come close to this kind of perfect love. There isn't a couple on earth who even comes close to the kind of love that your Lord has for you. Not even mom has this kind of perfect, blind, and unconditional love! When your Lord looks to you as a baptized child of Christ, He doesn't see all your wretched sin. Looking at you through the lens of Christ and His sacrificial wounds, which you have been baptized into, He only sees one who is completely covered over in Christ's perfect righteousness. ***Are you a sinner who deserves nothing but present and eternal punishment?*** Absolutely, and yet with a love so incomprehensible; a love so deep that He was willing to sacrifice Himself, willing to suffer God's hellish and righteous wrath for you in your place; a love so blind and perfect and unconditional, He gives you—unconditionally—the gift of Himself, His mercy, His grace, His blood-bought forgiveness... His peace.

How can we be so sure of all this? Easy: Because Jesus says so. **Here is where faith focuses! Nowhere else!** Here, and here alone, is our redemption. Here is the Son of God, the very same Son of God we are to look to, listen to, and hold fast to—***ALWAYS, as in every time, every place, and every circumstance***—lifted up and exalted for all the world ***to see and to know*** just how much God hates sin and yet loves sinners. “*It is finished!*” Here is where we hear victory, even though our Old Adam senses, with the rest of the world, see nothing but death and defeat. Here is where the faith that comes through hearing Christ rejoices. **It is finished!**

Here (Word and Sacrament) is *Christus Victor*, in your very presence, even in the midst of all the darkness and fear and tyranny and plague and wars and rumors of wars, holding out to you His free and unmerited gifts of **grace, mercy, and peace**. I know they don't look like much. To the rest of the world—some Christians included—these are nothing more than empty symbols or mere options or perks; a feel-good benefit of attending worship on Sunday morning, **but not really all that important or necessary**. That's all they see. But faith knows different. Faith *sees* differently. Faith sees differently because faith hears and believes what Christ has already said about such things. *“Baptism saves you. You have been baptized into My death and My resurrection. Take and eat; take and drink, this is My body and My blood, given and shed for you; for the forgiveness of all your sin. As often as you do this, remember what I have said. I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

Folks: This is our blessed assurance and joyous peace this very day. This is our **Christ-centered** reality, right here and right now. **How can you not cry out?!** May God, through the working of His Holy Spirit in these, His means of grace, open your ears, your hearts, and your minds so that your eyes of faith may not only see, but **actively seek** and hold fast to Christ and His victorious peace right where He tells you to look; right where He promises to be, now and to the end of the age.

AMEN