

Pastor Dan Waldschmidt – March 19th, 2017 – Isaiah 42:14-21

The Bible story that we heard today, the story of Jesus healing the blind man, is my son Luke's favorite Bible story. When I tell the story at dinner time I tell him, "The man couldn't see! Pretend you can't see!" And Luke closes his eyes. And then I say, "And Jesus rubbed mud in his eyes. And then I rub my fingers over his eyelids." And then Jesus told him to wash his eyes, "Wash, wash, wash." And then he could see! And then Luke opens eyes and smiles! Luke loves that Bible story and I do to. And one of the reasons that I love this story is that it is a real historical event with all kinds of spiritual meaning and so today we are going to meditate on the theme: The Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

First notice that this man was blind for 38 years. For 38 long years God allowed him to suffer from blindness. It's like in our Isaiah lesson, God says, **"For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back." (Isaiah 42:14)** Sometimes we have to wait a long time for God's deliverance, but God's deliverance always comes (if not in this life, then in the resurrection). After 38 years the Lord opened this man's eyes. Jesus spit in the dirt and made some mud and rubbed it on the man's eyes. And then he told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam and when he washed the mud off, he could see!

He had never seen anything in his life. He had been alive for 38 years and he hadn't seen a human being. He hadn't seen a tree. He hadn't seen a bird. He hadn't seen any animals. He hadn't seen blue sky or green grass. And now he saw it all for the first time. You and I have never seen heaven. For the most part we have no idea what heaven looks like. But God will lead us to heaven and open our eyes so we can see it. Like it says in our Isaiah lesson, **"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known." (Isaiah 42:16)** We would never be able to find the way to heaven on our own but Jesus leads us to heaven and then we'll be able to see heaven.

I remember when I was about ten years old my friends threw me a surprise birthday party. And they actually blindfolded me. And I didn't know where they were taking me. But then they took off the blindfold and we were at the roller rink and it was my birthday party! The Lord is leading us our entire life and in the end the Lord will remove the blind fold and we will be in heaven. Isaiah says, **"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known." (Isaiah 42:16)** Just like he opened the eyes of this man so that he could see all the things in this world someday the Lord will open our eyes so that we can see heaven.

But of the wonderful things that this man saw: the humans and the trees and birds and the animals. There was one thing he saw that was way better than anything else: He saw Jesus. He didn't see Jesus right away. Jesus told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam and when he washed the mud of his eyes Jesus wasn't there. But later Jesus came and found him. And said, **"Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him. Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." The man said, "Lord, I believe," and he fell down and worshiped him.** When the Lord opens our eyes and we get to see heaven, the best part will not be the angels and whatever other glorious things are there. The best part is that we will get to see Jesus and like this man we will fall down and worship him.

But in order for us to get to heaven, the Lord first had to cure our spiritual blindness and open our spiritual eyes. Just like this man was born physically blind, the Bible says that we by nature are spiritually blind. Isaiah describes that spiritual blindness: **"But those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame." (Isaiah 42:17)** The people of Israel were too

spiritually blind to see that these idols, made of wood and stone could not save them. By nature we are too spiritually blind to see that all of the idols we have cannot save us.

By nature we are spiritually blind, so blind that we worship things as if they were God. But the Lord gives sight to the blind. You were spiritually blind, but Jesus washed you in baptism and now you see. That baptismal font is your pool of Siloam where Jesus washed you and Jesus opened your eyes so that you could see. Isaiah says, **"I will turn the darkness into light before them." (Isaiah 42:16)** The Bible says that God **"called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)** The Lord opened your eyes so that instead of blindly following idols you could see Jesus.

But some of the people of Israel has spiritual macular degeneration. Isaiah says, **"Who is blind but my servant? Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one in covenant with me, blind like the servant of the Lord?" (Isaiah 42:19)** How can we avoid this spiritual macular degeneration? By keeping your eyes focused the one who gave you sight in the first place. When Jesus was on the cross, lots of people were walking by on the road. And if you would stop them and ask "What do you see?" They would have said, "I see a poor man suffering terribly." Others would have said, "I see an imposter getting what he deserves." But you see something different when you look at Jesus on the cross. You see your Jesus blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. You see Satan falling like lightning from heaven because he's been defeated by Jesus' death on the cross. You see the long bill of your sins nailed there because they've been paid in full. A good Bible verse to keep in mind all through lent is Hebrews 12:2, **"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame."** This says that Jesus endured the cross because of the joy set before him. And the joy set before him was saving you and me. He endured the cross because he wanted so badly to save you and me. The Lord opened your eyes so that you could look at the cross and see how much he loves you. And seeing that is even more glorious than seeing the world for the very first time. Amen.