

## WELCOME 22 March 2020 – 4 Lent ‘20 A

DEEP CYCLE: DEEP VISION

John 9:1-41

Good morning & Welcome to Living Water Fellowship! Special welcome to our visitors & guests...It is wonderful you're here! Please stay for morning tea after worship. God always does good stuff there too!

Your GP today has this quote: "Nothing is easier than self-deceit. For what every man wishes, that he also believes to be true." — Demosthenes He was a Greek philosopher, statesman, orator intellectual who died about 325 years before Jesus was born...2100 yrs later, Danish philosopher, writer, theologian & social critic Søren Kierkegaard wrote: "There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn't true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true." —Søren Kierkegaard.

Two guys separated by 2000 yrs...same thought...both knew blindness could be self-inflicted

The other week we noted a difference b/t knowledge & wisdom & over the millennia, we've also known there was a difference b/t the physical act of seeing & genuine insight...discernment...vision...as the contemporary proverb notes: "There are none so blind as those who will not see."      Blindness can be a choice....

Blindness is more than just the quality of our physical vision or the condition of our eyes. How we see others, how we view the world, the way we perceive our lives is less about our eyes & more about our hearts. True blindness is more often a result of fears & attachments to which we cling tightly & then project onto the world & people around us. But Jesus says: "*I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind & to show those who think they see that they are blind.*" — Jn 9:39

Jesus came to expose blindness & grant sight – the deep vision of God's rule of grace/love unleashed in this world drawing all things to the Father in love & restoration...making all things new according to the Father's desire & design and creating an infectious community of those who live by faith, act in love & live from the Spirit's joy & hope.

Jesus confronts our blindness, not in wrath, but in love & healing so that as we live responsive & obedient to him, others can receive restored sight, remade lives, & their future secured in him forever.

We'll explore & experience that together today as again Jesus comes in the power of his Spirit to plant his love within us & to live through all we are & do.

Let's pray & then we'll get stuck into it!

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world. You give sight to the blind & hope to those who sit in darkness. Open our eyes to your wondrous work around & in us. Expose our resistance to your promises. Reveal our disobedience to your word. Show us the mistrust & lack of faith in our hearts so that we see you with clarity, trust you with certainty & live with you ever before our eyes bringing grace to all & peace with the Father forever. Take all that we are & use us for your glory...in your Name. Amen!*

4 Lent '20 A - DEEP CYCLE: DEEP VISION  
John 4:5-42

FAITH CHAT:

- Share one place you experienced God's presence this week.

We'll get to a few others later...But first...When I was in seminary, our faculty all adopted a Biblical interpretation rule of thumb...Before we understand what we see, we have to actually see what we see."

It's true...We often look at Scripture through assumptions & pre-existing beliefs that may not help us fully understand what we read. That's true about many areas of our lives...my Econ professor in Uni was of Japanese descent & when he walked into class the 1<sup>st</sup> day a number of students audibly groaned expecting lectures filtered through a heavy Asian accent. Surprise...his English was impeccable. No hint of an accent. I'll never forget a conversation I had with some young people from one of the countries in West Africa about another student at their school from a different country...they were convinced "all people from that country are lazy." I fell out laughing.

What social-scientists refer to as our "worldview" is that set of assumptions or beliefs or mindsets through which we "read/see/experience" our world. We all operate with those lenses through which we see/engage life around us. For instance: *As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. "Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?"* What worldview is in operation here for the disciples?

The disciples along with most other folks in the world of Jesus' day assume a direct cause/effect connection b/t suffering & wrongdoing. Do something wrong; you suffer. This guy's blind, so someone **MUST** have sinned to bring about his blindness. **MUST** be someone to blame. You get what you deserve. The only question...who was it? 2 false worldviews in play here...sides of coin...If you're suffering it means you've sinned. If I'm not suffering it means I'm not as big a sinner as you. I'm better than you.

They see the world through a fear lens. If sin yields suffering...it's only a matter of time before I get mine. I'm not perfect. Never have been. I'm sure my day's coming. The scales will weigh against me sooner or later. The score will balance not in my favour...So I've got to be on my guard...look around & point out the person worse than me...more deserving of punishment/suffering/wrath than me. I've got to be able to say, "I'm not as bad as..."

But Jesus sees the man & his circumstance as something in which God will display His work/power. Jesus sees need as reason for mission. Suffering means loving action is called for. Poverty, hardship, handicap, pain, misfortune, or genuine foolishness...Suffering means loving action is called for. Suffering is the arena in which God reveals his hand. He doesn't convene a meeting host a conference summon a theological inquiry or appoint someone to look into it. Genuine love compels genuine action in the face of genuine need. **THIS** is where God will act!

Jesus sees this life & its circumstances – whether you're shouting 'hallelujah' or crying 'heaven help me' - as the arena of God's power & plan & purpose being brought to their fullness in human lives. The disciples are looking for someone to blame... They're wondering at whom they can point fingers...who's at fault...who's guilty... Their worldview is conditioned by fear & self-protection...Jesus lives a Kingdom worldview

Can you feel the difference? In a world where every moment is a chance for God to show himself & his power & be at work...In a world where every interaction can be a place of giving life renewing hope restoring joy...it's always daytime, there's always hope, there's always a new beginning...it's always daytime. But in a world where you're asking who's to blame & there's reproach condemnation accusation threat... it's always darkness. In a worldview conditioned by fear & self-protection it's "always winter & never spring" if you'll let me borrow from CS Lewis.

*Then Jesus spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, & spread the mud over the blind man's eyes. He told him, "Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam" (Siloam means "sent"). So the man went & washed & came back seeing! I love it...Jesus doesn't ask permission He violates all the Wuhan-virus social distancing requirements...just spits & touches. Jesus steps in to heal – to bring light – to restore life in its fullness. That's the universal story of God's eternal love that refuses to leave us in the clutches of darkness & death... Jesus steps in - invades this world so that by his death we receive life. That's "grace" that comes to us while we are still sinners...while we're yet God's enemies...that comes to us in baptism...the meal of Holy Communion...study preaching & reading of God's Word. Jesus makes the decisive move to reclaim a broken humanity for the Father. The blind man? All he knows so far is his experience ...a word & a touch from Jesus & he obeys...& his life is forever transformed. Interestingly enough...*

As a beggar he's barely visible...Oh sure the crowds saw him...religious folks saw him ...his parents saw him...but only on the basis of his disability neediness & begging. He was defined by his lack of sight...but at least he knew he was blind. Everyone else thought they could see the true reality...No one except Jesus saw him as anything other than a guy born blind. Jesus saw him with the deep vision of the Kingdom of God at hand & at work & breaking in in its power & glory & grace.

But of course...darkness wants darkness to prevail...Because from that moment he is under the pump. As soon as he comes back from Siloam darkness & disbelief shift into overdrive. Just listen to the conversations...it's not the same guy...just looks like him...he really couldn't have been blind...he really hasn't been healed ...not possible once you're blind you're blind. Any reason to disbelieve is good enough reason to stay in the dark. Darkness finds any excuse to stay dark. Blindness finds any excuse to stay blind. Except the guy who has been healed knows exactly what Jesus did. Once the light is on, once his eyes are healed & opened he can see more than anyone else around him. Not just his eyes are affected...his heart is now being shaped by the power of Christ. Not fully yet...but his sight grows...intensifies & deepens. His vision magnifies his vision deepens as his heart is changed...

At first all he has to do is defend his own identity...100 points. "It's me. I was the blind beggar y'all used to see over there. It's me." But everyone around him is so attached – so locked in rusted on to what he **WAS** that they cannot see what he has become. 4X – 2x by the crowds & 2x by the religious leaders he is forced to give witness to the work Jesus has performed. They are so attached to his past when he was barely visible to them, they cannot see him fully in the new present. They can't see the new life, the new man, the new creation that bears testimony to the work of God in Jesus. They turn a blind eye to this man & the One who has performed a once-in-a-lifetime miracle of God. "none are so blind as those who will not see." The disbelieving mob is Exhibit A.

Even his own parents distance themselves from him. They can talk about their blind son but not about their healed seeing son. They deny what is right before their eyes. Attachment to the past does that. Fear does that. Both keep us from seeing a larger reality, from living with a larger deeper vision. So the parents live with tunnel vision only seeing what was true in the past & seeing clearly their fear of being turned on by the mob like is happening to their son. Remember...blindness is not always related to the darkness outside us...it's quite often the nature of the darkness within.

Read on & you see the attacks intensify & he is forced to tell & retell & retell & retell what has happened to him...But with each subsequent telling of his story, his vision deepens, his boldness grows & his confidence increases. Never does he offer more than he genuinely knows. Never does he back away from what he knows has occurred in his life. Never is he responsible for the response of his hearers. But with each subsequent telling of his story, his vision deepens, his boldness grows & his confidence increases.

And it's that on-going heart-level transformation that gets him kicked out of polite religious company...thrown from the synagogue. The religious skeptics can't argue his experience. They can't shake his confidence in the One whose grace, power, & love have so transformed him. So they have to resort to force & force him out of their midst. His very presence, his bold, confident, deep vision was an affront to their comfortable secure religious blindness...so he gets the boot.

But Jesus goes to him now a 2<sup>nd</sup> time & a relationship that began with mud & spittle & a command to go wash now becomes one of true faith, deep vision & unshakable devotion. Like all the early followers of Jesus, this man carries the bubbling excitement of an encounter w/ Jesus that changed his life. He didn't ask/search for it, Jesus just touched him. Grace – mercy – compassion – irresistible love brought this man from darkness to light...brokenness to healing. It's not really a hard story to tell. It's *HIS* life. It's *HIS* story. No one can refute the facts. "*I was blind. Now I'm not!*"

Until this point, he has never confessed Jesus as anything more than a prophet, someone sent from God. But now he offers his life in worship. Here's the thing: Is he any different from us...really? I don't know how your story goes. I don't know what your lifetime/short time following Jesus has been like. But you do! All I know is mine. We didn't earn it/deserve it/ask for it/go out & win it. Jesus came for us. He just touched us. Died for us. Rose for us. Lives in us...Took hold of us in grace – mercy – compassion – irresistible love & brought you & me from darkness to light – from brokenness to healing – from death to life...& there is a whole world around us that have **NO** experience of Jesus. Who are blind but think they can see....dying & convinced they're living it up...seeing this world through the lenses of their fears & attachments to things that will never last...And they're just dying for you to be able to finish this sentence so they can understand...When it comes to Jesus: "All I know is \_\_\_\_\_" take a minute & tell your neighbour & share why it matters

Jesus came to expose blindness & grant sight – the deep vision of God's rule of grace/love unleashed in this world drawing all things to the Father in love & restoration...making all things new according to the Father's desire & design and creating an infectious community of those who live by faith, act in love & live from the Spirit's joy & hope. Jesus confronts our blindness, not in wrath, but in love & healing so that as we live responsive & obedient to him, others can receive restored sight, remade lives, & their future secured in him forever.

Let us pray...Lord Jesus come today to grant sight to our hearts and obedience to our lives. Pour out your Spirit to bring your boldness to our witness and your joy and hope to all we do. Help us to see you at work in our world and to offer our lives for your Kingdom's purpose in offering new life and sight to those around us. I pray right now for...(silent prayer for those living distant from God's grace) In your name we pray... Amen