

With Eyes of Faith: Be Now My Vision
Matthew 9: 27-33
Rev. Loren McGrail
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Irondequoit United Church of Christ

*Be now my vision, O God of my heart;
nothing surpasses the love you impart---
You my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, your presence my light.
From Hymn Be Now My Vision*

The two blind men followed Jesus before they were healed. They knew him through means other than sight. They had prophetic vision. They recognized him as the Son of David, the Messiah. In the Message translation it says that Jesus touched their eyes and told them to become what they believe. And it happened and they could see. The miracle happened before the healing just as it has happened before with the demons, the leper, the Centurion, and now these blind men. The trust in Jesus' healing power or authority is what leads to their recovery of health. It is their faith in God and Jesus as the messenger that is affirmed by the physical healing.

In our gospel story this morning, the men could not be silent after they could see; they had to share with their community the wondrous thing that had occurred. I invite you to consider, Dear Ones, that part of their healing was this truth telling---that God in Jesus has come to heal us all, to bring us all out of the shadows and into the light. Our stories, our lives are tangled in the web of God's love if the eyes of our heart can see. These men found new freedom when they shared their stories. Anyone who is familiar with AA programs knows that the first step is to get sober, but to begin the journey of recovery, you must learn to tell your story and discover what it has to teach you about becoming whole again.

I have been thinking a lot about how many musicians and singers I know are blind but also have tremendous musical talent. Andrea Bocelli who we heard singing Amazing Grace is but one of these. Each time I hear him sing "I once was blind but now I see" I choke up as I see him stare up into the heavens. Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles, and the Blind Boys of Alabama are other examples of blind men with extraordinary gifts.

Dear Ones, I wish to remind you that becoming more "whole" should not be equated with perfection. Healing is about transformation or finding a new life out of hopelessness. This can happen in many ways beside the binary categories of normal/abnormal.

Disability studies reminds us that ability and disability relate to one another not as polarities but as Walter Wilson says, in his book, *Healing in the Gospel of Matthew*, "fluid descriptors on a continuum...limits are not seen as a 'problem' to overcome but a reality that shapes who we are and our relationships with others, including our relationship with God."

Helen Keller, born deaf and blind, comes to mind as a woman who did not overcome her disabilities but rather worked with and through them to become one of the strongest voices for social justice in her time. She said many wonderful things throughout her life, but I wish to lift up those things she said about sight and vision this morning in particular: "The only thing that is worse than being blind is having sight and no vision." How many people do you know have sight but no vision of what is right in front of them or what is possible? This applies both to individuals and groups of people. Keller often talked about social and moral blindness. "My darkness has been filled with the light of intelligence, and behold, the outer-day lit world was stumbling in social blindness" or "There is no blindness more insidious, more fatal than this race for profit."

I invite you to contemplate on how our day lit world is stumbling around? Who are the ones that can lead us through or out? Are they political leaders or young women like Greta Thunberg or Amanda Graham? If

you are following Jesus then you already know the answer so walk and work toward God's vision of shalom, "on earth as it is already in heaven."

Our theme this Sunday is mental health. Being unable to see who we really are because we are stuck in a story that others tell about us or we tell ourselves can lead to a form of blindness that can rob us of a sense of empowerment and vision for the future. It can also make us feel separate from others, God, and even ourselves. These are all issues related to our mental health and sense of well-being. Recovering our sight begins with recognizing to whom we belong and those who come in God's holy name which includes each and every one of you as we are all called to be vessels of the holy. May this become part of our personal and collective story today, to become eye dogs for each other, companions on the journey to recovering our wholeness. Lord, be now our vision so we can see you in all

I would like to end with this short prayer/poem adapted from Steve Garnass Holmes:

Jesus, you healed the blind.
You opened the eyes of those who could not see
the miracles of God's grace.
Remove the scales that cover our eyes, the cataracts
of fear that keep us from seeing God's presence.
Help us to see justice and mercy when it emerges,
to see the glory in the ordinary and hope in the gloom.
Help us to see with eyes of faith.