

LENTEN III

March 11, 2009

Introduction

I Cor. 12 'we were all baptized into one body',

Romans 5 'in Christ we form one body',

Colossians 3 'as members of one body ... let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly'.

By means of God's Word and Sacraments; Holy Baptism, Holy Communion in Christ, we are the Body of Christ, the Holy Christian Church, Immanuel = God with us! That is what I have tried to affirm with you this 2009 Lenten Season with our theme = **THE BODY OF CHRIST**. We've considered each week in song, prayer and lessons, and teaching and preaching: The Ears of Christ, The Hands of Christ and this week: **THE EYES OF CHRIST!**

I.

In our Gospel lesson for today, John 9, we're told, as Jesus passed by, He saw a man, blind from birth. If you notice something in the episodes of Jesus' physical healings in the Bible, most of the time, they begin with Jesus seeing the need and through eyes of love and compassion Jesus responds to the need.

For example, when the widow of Nain was burying her only son, Jesus saw her need and raised her son to life. When Jesus came to Peter's home, He saw Peter's mother-in-law lying sick with fever and Jesus healed her.

The eyes of Christ saw the need and responded with empathy, tenderness, forgiveness and care. That's grace = unmerited, undeserved, even unasked for love. Simply, love for the sake of loving of the person in need. In the famous hymn, *Amazing Grace*, John Newton, writes about that grace of God, 'I was blind but now I see'. The eyes of Christ see misery, and the Body of Christ acts in mercy.

Psalms 33 says 'The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His unfailing love'. Our Gradual this Lenten season on Sunday mornings invites us from Hebrews 12: **'O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith'.**

II.

Our eyesight is a great gift of God. I have often said the one sense I would have the most difficulty losing would be my sense of sight. To lose my sense of touch or hearing or smell or taste, though very, very difficult, would not be as difficult as not being able to see. So much of what we love and appreciate comes to us, first of all, through our eyes. I admire people who've overcome or strive to overcome their loss of eyesight, through using their other senses, magnified. But, to be blind or becoming blind has to be one of the most difficult losses on this side of heaven.

With our eyes we see the beauty of a sunrise and the splendor of a sunset. With our eyes we can lie on the ground on a warm summer night and see the stars. The eyes of our God, when He finished each day of His creation, we're told in **Genesis 1, 'God saw that it was good'**.

With our eyes, we receive the satisfaction of seeing a job completed, the pleasure of a job well done. God saw that also on the last day of creation, **Genesis 1, 'God saw all He had made and it was very good'**. With our eyes, we see the smile of someone we love. With our eyes, we see the whiteness of fresh snow and the fresh green of early spring. With our eyes, we see the power of a summer storm. The eyes of Christ, our God made flesh and blood, saw these things also. With our eyes, we watch a baby sleep in peace and security. With our eyes, we are mesmerized by the sparkling water of a stream or lake. With our eyes, we are hypnotized by the fire dancing in a fireplace or fire pit. The eyes of Christ, our invisible God, made visible through Jesus, enjoyed all these things, also.

WE HAVE A GOD WITH EYES, WHO SEES AND RESPONDS TO WHAT HE SEES!

III.

The eyes of God made flesh and blood in Christ also sees the same ugliness and violence and pain that our eyes see on the evening news or in newspapers and magazines or even in our own personal lives. The eyes of Christ see the hatred and rejection of us human beings against one another. The eyes of Christ see the log in our own eyes which we don't want to see, as we in unforgiving judgment try to pick on the speck we see in someone else's eye. The eyes of Christ, our God, sees our dishonesty, our deception, our deceit, our hypocrisy, our God sees it all and even more that we are blind too. The eyes of Christ see what we do in secret thinking we are getting away with something, God sees all we feel and think in our souls, our jealousies, our harbored hatred, our guilty conscience, God sees what we don't say, but is on the very tip of our tongues, in our minds eye. The eyes of Christ see it all, but by His grace God sees us through His eyes of love anyway. And that is eye opening! That's the ultimate response of God to our greatest need, to see His grace, His mercy which sees us in all our sins and loves us anyway. *Amazing Grace ... I was blind but now I see.* Jesus was not blind to our human need of forgiveness. Jesus, saw that as His purpose upon this planet earth. Jesus, saw our need very, very well and like with the widow of Nain or Peter's mother-in-law or the blind man in our text, seeing the need in spite of who sinned or didn't sin, we're all blind in sin by nature, Jesus, God incarnate, the body of Christ responded, not with damnation or condemnation, but with grace, mercy and forgiveness, which opens our eyes to see that we have a God who loves us. Now that is some eye opening good news. As the ears of Christ heard the hammer upon the nails pounded into His hands, as the hands of Christ felt those nails tear into His muscles and tendons. The eyes of Christ saw those doing the nailing, as not only the Roman soldiers, but as all of us sinful human beings, and Jesus said, hearing, feeling and seeing, as the Body of Christ:

**‘FATHER, FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW, they do not see, they are blind to,
WHAT THEY ARE DOING!’**

We must see! In our spiritual blindness Jesus saw our need and He responded with forgiveness of all our sins. For Jesus’ sake, God now sees us justified = just–if–I’d never sinned. For Jesus’ sake God sees us sinners washed and ‘born again’, recreated in His sight as = the Body of Christ, the Holy Christian Church, as Jesus with skin on for others to see and believe that there is Amazing Grace and mercy and forgiveness for them also. As our First Lesson, **1 Samuel 16**, says **‘man looks on outward appearances, but the Lord looks on the heart’**. And what God sees in our hearts is the faith, which He has placed there, faith for us to see Jesus Christ as our Savior, and us, as the Body of Christ.

IV.

I like country music because it captures, for me, the story of peoples lives in a few stanzas. I can relate to country music’s message through the good and bad in my life. George Strait has a song I would like to share with you as a conclusion and application of what I’ve tried to lead you to hear, feel and see, as the Body of Christ, the Church, these first three weeks, on our Lenten journey. I won’t speak to you again explicitly about the Body of Christ this Lenten season until Good Friday. In the mean time, I leave you, as the Body of Christ, His Church, with this song:

I Saw God Today!

Just walked down the street to the coffee shop, had to take a break

I’d been by her side for 18 hours straight.

Saw a flower growin’ in the middle of the sidewalk, pushin up through the concrete

Like it was planted right there for me to see.

The flashin’ lights, the honkin horns, all seemed to fade away.

In the shadow of the hospital at 5:08, I saw God today.

Chorus: I’ve been to church, I’ve read the Book, I know He’s here but I don’t look

Near as often as I should, (yeah, I know I should)

His fingerprints are everywhere, I just slowed down to stop and stare

Opened my eyes and man I swear, I saw God today

Saw a couple walking by, they were holding hands, man, she had that glow

Yeah, I couldn’t help but notice, she was starting to show

Stood there for a minute taking in the sky, lost in that sunset

A splash of amber melted into shades of red.

Chorus

*Got my face pressed up against the nursery glass, she's sleepin' like a rock
My name on her wrist, wearin' tiny pink socks,
She's got my nose, she's got her mama's eyes, my brand new baby girl, she's a miracle
I saw God today!*

As Jesus said to the woman at the well, John 4, 'God is Spirit'. And because God is Spirit He is very difficult to see most of the time. But, that's the marvelous message of what can only be seen 'by faith' as the central message of God's Word. God who is Spirit, who could remain far away and far removed from us sinfully blind human beings, God became visible in Jesus Christ, as our Savior, who by His Amazing Grace saw our sinful blinding human need and He responded with mercy and forgiveness upon the cross. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus".

Sin, hurt, grief and a whole lot of other dark and blinding things make it very difficult, even impossible at times for most people to see God for what He is and who He is, until they see Him through you, the Body of Christ, baptized, in communion with God's Word richly dwelling in our lives. Seeing through you as the Holy Christian Church, Immanuel = God with us that they have a God who loves them and forgives them! I agree with George Strait 'I saw God today', in church, in the Book and in and through each of you = as Jesus with skin on. You who see other's needs and respond with care and compassion and mercy and empathy and forgiveness.

YOU ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST, HIS EARS, HIS HANDS, HIS EYES. I saw God today through you! Amen.