

Sermon Draft

Text: Isaiah 42:14–21

Sermon: “Darkness to Light”

We continue our Lenten journey this morning focusing on repentance and forgiveness with the imagery of sin as darkness-blindness and forgiveness as light-seeing.

In our text today, God’s people have been seeing things only through their own lens missing what God had wanted them to see. The only correction for that is Christ, and Jesus gives us eyes to look with the Light of the world.

God’s people have been looking at things all wrong! We were conceived in sin and born into the darkness of this world. Our eyes do not work the way they should (physical blindness, deterioration with age). We have the desire to look at things we shouldn’t (pornography, other examples). We are not able to see the things of God for what they truly are. Water, bread, and wine. Suffering like in our Gospel lesson from John. The disciples asking who sinned that this man was born blind. All of this wrongful seeing stems from idolatry.

Like in our Old Testament reading: ***“They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, “You are our gods.”*** But it just was the Israelites of the Old Testament that God is deeply affected by our looking at things the wrong way. He has been holding his peace and restraining himself ***“for a long time”*** (v 14). He is now like a woman in labor, crying out, gasping, and panting (v 14). God is profoundly affected by our sin. But this also pictures a new life for his people about to emerge. He is making ready the way for his own visitation. ***“I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools.”***

God’s people were intended to look at things in a much better way. Isaiah reiterates the special status of Israel as ***“the servant of the Lord.”*** God’s chosen people were called to be a blessing for all nations (Genesis 12:1–3). But the ideal servant of Israel that we read about in chapter 42:1–4 has turned into the blind servant of our text (v 19).

The blind servant is us! Our eyes see our Lord's deeds (in creation, in his Word), but we do not pay attention to them as we should.

Our ears hear our Lord's words, but we do not observe them as we should.

God himself restores the way we see things. It begins with a call to repentance (v 18). Before we can truly see, we must first admit that we can't see (Confession).

In today's Gospel, the blind man admits his ignorance several times, while the Pharisees keep talking about how much they know. The blind man ends up seeing more and more clearly, while the Pharisees, who more than anyone else at the time should have been "seeing," become blinder and blinder. ***"For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind"*** (John 9:39). It continues with absolution through God's Word and Sacraments. ***"Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"*** (John 3:3).

When our old selves are put to death, a new person with new and improved vision arises out of the water to which he sends us. Like in our Gospel when Jesus restored the sight of the blind man to the pool of Siloam. (“Siloam” means “sent” or “sent one.”)

This giving of spiritual sight is entirely the Lord’s work (Isaiah 42:16). He will continue to lead, guide, and be with us (v 16).

God calls his people, us to look with the light of the world. Return again and again to the font of the “Sent One,” and we’ll see things with the Light of the world, the Light that makes all the difference in the world. The ones who are truly blind are the ones who see things only with earthly eyes.

The light of the world changes how we look at things. Baptism is more than simple water. The Lord’s Supper is more than simple bread and wine. Suffering is not simply punishment. It may be to display the works of God (John 9:3).

The theology of the cross means seeing our Lord hidden under the opposite. The cross is the greatest glory. Recall how darkness was over the land when the one who is the light of the world hung on the cross! The light of the world is a daily lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Israel 42:21; Psalm 119:105).

Whatever it is that weighs most heavily on your heart right now, look at it with the light of the world. This is a light that shines in the midst of family troubles, a light that depression can't touch, and a light that your own doubts can't put out. A light in the midst of Covid-19. Whatever comes our way, we see it through this lens first. There's no darker place we can go where this light is not there before us. We have the light that nothing whatsoever, not even our own death can overcome. And as much as the world, in the darkness of its blindness, wants to put it out, it still hasn't, and it never will.

Amen