

Lent 4A, 2011

Text: John 9:1-7

Title: "Light of the World"

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Come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus.

Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Jesus, the Son of God.

Jesus, the bread of life.

Jesus, our Savior.

Jesus, the door.

Jesus, who gives living water.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

And Jesus, the light of the world.

Imagine that you are out shopping in the evening, picking up some groceries. And as you are going down the aisles, all of the lights go dark. You are instantly in complete, total, utter darkness.

What do you do? Do you just stay put and wait? Do you try to feel your way to an exit? Do you call for help, maybe pull out your cell phone and try to get some light?

If you take someone from the light, and plunge them into darkness, they will be lost, afraid, they will be disoriented, confused.

But if you are born in darkness, and darkness is all that you know, you learn to live with the darkness. You adjust, you cope with the situation. You learn how to get around, how to use a cane or a guide dog. You learn Braille and find other ways to communicate. You learn habits that help you remember where things are and how to find what you need. If darkness is all you know, you learn to live with it.

Here we have a man who is born blind. He has never seen his parents or his friends. He has never seen a flower or a sunrise or a sunset. His entire life has been lived in the darkness. Darkness is all that he knows.

But when Jesus comes, everything changes. Some mud and a little water, and he can see. His eyes are as good as new. What once was dark now is light.

Imagine what it would be like to see clearly for the first time, after living your entire life in the dark.

Even ordinary things- a house, a tree, the clear blue sky would be marvels to behold. Imagine seeing the faces of your family for the first time, your loved ones whom you have only known by

the sound of their voices. Imagine seeing colors, brightness and darkness, all the shades and hues for the first time. He was probably afraid to shut his eyes, for fear that the darkness would return. Once you've been in the light, it's hard to go back to the darkness. Imagine the joy of this man, who once was blind, but now can see.

Imagine the joy of this man's friends and family. Imagine how happy they were for him, and how they rejoiced together.

The Pharisees should have been rejoicing and praising God for this miracle. They should have marveled at His grace and His power. They should have been happy for this man. But instead, they can only find fault with him. For simply acknowledging Jesus as a prophet (which was just common sense, who else is going to be able to heal the blind), they expel him from the synagogue. They cut him off completely.

So Jesus seeks the formerly blind man out a second time, he won't leave him alone and separated. Jesus reveals to him that He is the Messiah. He tells him that the man he is looking at is not just a healer, but the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Savior. And the man confesses his faith and worships Jesus.

The man who had lived his entire life in darkness is now the one who can truly see. And the Pharisees, who are able to see, are those in darkness.

Here's the point.

Apart from Jesus, you are in the dark. Even if you think you can see, even if you are sure that you know everything and have the whole world figured out, apart from Jesus, you're as blind as a bat.

But I'm sure you know that already. You're here because you know where to find the light. You've been given your sight. You know who Jesus is and what He's done for you.

Our problem is that, even though we know where to find the light, we still like to dabble in darkness. We figure that, because we know where the light is, we can venture into the darkness and still be able to find our way back to the light.

Paul encourages us to put the darkness behind us, to walk as children of the light- in things that are good and right and true, discerning what is pleasing to the Lord. But too often that's not how we live, that's not how we walk. We like to sneak off into the shadows.

We are constantly tempted by the darkness. We are constantly tempted to stray from the light.

The temptation is that we can get away with it, that the darkness can hide us. No one will ever know. "I can keep my sins hidden, and somehow it will be okay." No one will ever know.

We not only become comfortable in the darkness, we learn to love it. We see the light as dangerous and threatening. We are afraid of what will happen if we step totally into the light, and all of our deeds are revealed.

This is one of Satan's biggest lies- that sin is best left in the dark.

Satan tries to convince you that darkness is better than light. It's better to keep things in the dark than to bring them into the light. It's better to keep things secret than to risk exposing them. It's better to hide everything in lies than to tell the truth.

Satan's got you convinced that the best thing for you to do is to keep your sins in the dark. Don't come to confession because the pastor might look down on you. Or worse, he might tell other people your secrets (which, of course, will never happen).

"Keep your sins hidden, keep your life in the dark, because if you step into the light, people won't like what they see." That's what Satan says.

That sounds good to us, because as long as we keep our sins hidden, we can keep doing them without any pressure to change. If you confess your sins, you have to admit that they are wrong, and that you need to change. But if you keep things in the dark, you can keep living the way that you want.

Satan has you convinced that darkness is better than light, that lies are better than the truth, and as long as we keep everything hidden, everything will be fine.

Jesus comes to bring light. He comes to enlighten you and open your eyes. When your eyes are open and you see how destructive and harmful your sin is to yourself and to the people you love, you see Satan for the liar that He is.

Light is a good thing. Light enables us to see clearly. It may not be easy to step into the light, but it's truly what's best for you. It allows you to see yourselves, but most important, it allows you to see Jesus for who He really is.

Jesus brings light, not just to shine on you and your sinfulness, but to shine on Himself, so that you can see Jesus clearly.

Jesus shines a spotlight on Himself, on His life, His death and His resurrection. He gets you to focus on Him, and everything that He has done for you.

How does the gradual begin? Come let us fix our eyes on Jesus. Not on ourselves. Not on our sinfulness, but on Jesus. We fix our eyes on Jesus, because Jesus, the light of the world, has opened our eyes.

Jesus opens our eyes, fills them with His light so that we can see Him clearly for who He really is, the Son of Man, God made flesh who dwells with us, becoming like us in every way except without sin, so that He might bear our sin and be our Savior.

Come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the light of the world.