

FOOTPRINTS

The monthly newsletter of

Followers of Christ Lutheran Church

A Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

12357 S. 248th Ave., Plainfield, IL 60585-6701

Phone: 815-439-0700

followersofchrist3@yahoo.com

Bradley Haugen

www.followersofchristelca.com

Pastor

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Dear Followers of Christ,

Faith is like having your eyes opened. "I once was blind but now I see," wrote hymn-writer John Newton, also a former slave ship captain, as he penned the words to "Amazing Grace." And one of my favorite Bible stories is that of Jesus and the blind man in the Gospel of John. As you already know, Jesus opens the eyes of the man born blind. Although the man is given physical sight, his sight goes deeper than that. The man "sees" Jesus by believing and trusting in him; we know that the man "sees" Jesus because he wants to become his follower. To see is to believe and trust in Jesus.

Before Jesus came along, no one could see this blind man. The man was considered a sinner – people figured, wrongly, that he or his family must have done something to deserve his blindness. The only one who saw him was Jesus. And Jesus gave the man not just the ability to see in general; Jesus restored the man's sight so that he could see Jesus by believing and trusting in him. Faith, then, is a way of seeing, you could say.

In order for us to see Jesus, as in trusting and believing in him, we depend on him seeing us first. He needs to see us and to restore our sight if we are ever going to believe and trust in him. We need our eyes opened – not just to see in general – but to see him. Throughout the season of Lent, which ends on March 24th (Palm Sunday), we are confronted with our own blindness, our own inability and unwillingness to see Jesus with the eyes of faith.

This Lent I have reflected back on times in my life when I have been blind to Jesus and didn't even know it. While I was living in the city for a few years after college, I saw a lot of things I hadn't seen before. I saw poverty, homelessness, and the havoc that violence, drug addictions, and mental illness wreak on people's lives. My first job out of college was at a homeless shelter where I assisted people in finding a job and a place to live. I saw that I couldn't do much to help, and I doubted my purpose of being there at all. Again, I saw a lot that made me feel discouraged and hopeless.

Thankfully, the folks at the shelter were able and willing to teach me a thing or two. Even though they didn't have their lives together – far from it, according to my unrealistic standards – many of them could nevertheless "see" Jesus. They saw Jesus in the presence of the shelter where they could get a meal and have a place to sleep that wasn't the streets. They saw Jesus in the neighborhood church where they belonged and were accepted, whether they had a home or not. Despite life being nearly impossible, they had a sense that Jesus had opened their eyes. By believing and trusting in him, by leaning upon his Church, they saw Jesus. Jesus and his followers were their hope and encouragement.

As we begin Holy Week with Palm Sunday on March 24th, we'll have an eye-opening experience ourselves. As we hear and enter into the story of our Lord's Passion, we'll see Jesus. We won't see Jesus as we'd like him to be. We'll see Jesus as he is.

On Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday, be prepared to have your eyes opened. Be prepared to see Jesus whose life, death, and resurrection open our eyes – in order to show us a God who, despite our blindness, is, in the end, for us rather than against us.

In faith,

Pastor Brad