

Who is in the Spotlight March 19, 2023

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

There are many who have the ability to be in the spotlight. When the pressure is on, they can perform their best. But then again, not everyone enjoys being in the spotlight all the time. And that seems to be the case in our long Gospel reading this morning.

If you recall, Jesus noticed a man who was born blind. Having been born blind, the man's eyes did not react to light quite the same way as someone whose eyes are more familiar with light. And so, taking the opportunity that presented itself, Jesus' disciples asked Him what caused the man's blindness. They wanted to know whose sin it was that caused the man's blindness—his or his parents'. But "Jesus answered them, 'It was not that this man who sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him'" (v.3), and continuing, He shared with them that He is the light of the world.

Then, Jesus anointed the man's eyes with mud, and after telling him to wash in the pool of Siloam, the man returned and was no longer blind. The man's neighbors also noticed him. Because he was in the spotlight, they questioned him, and the man gave

witness to what had happened. But when they asked him where Jesus was, he said that he did not know.

So, they brought the man to the Pharisees to investigate further. And as the man shared with them what had happened to him, they became concerned. Some of them were concerned that the Sabbath day was not kept the way that they wanted it to be kept. But others wondered how someone who is a sinner could perform signs like this. And finally, the Pharisees asked him, “What do you say about the one who opened your eyes?” And the formerly blind man, who was in the spotlight bore witness that he had come to see Jesus in the true light, and said, “He is a prophet.”

When the spotlight shines on you, what do you think is revealed? Certainly, it would reveal our darkness in death because we are all born spiritually blind. Not only are we born in sin and are enemies of God, but we are also born without the knowledge of God’s light that shines in the world. Because when the Law of God puts its spotlight on us, it reveals that we are sinners in need of help.

Like the Pharisees in our text, we would rather examine Jesus. We might try to examine Him with our own interpretations and on our own terms. But because of our own sinfulness, we are not able to see Him as the light of Christ. We see Him as a moral example to follow. And what do we do? We send our kids to Sunday school so that they might learn morality. And when we listen to His teaching, we often pay attention as long as His words support our own thoughts and opinions. So that we can justify ourselves and hold on to that feeling of being right.

But in order to see someone or something clearly, it depends on the light. As you may or may not know, this is the case with Lincoln's statue downtown at the Lincoln Memorial. The artist who created it, Daniel Chester French, understood that there would be a "large skylight" bringing in natural light directly above Lincoln's statue. But when the final plans changed, it did not happen. Without the skylight, Lincoln's face appeared somewhat different than what was imagined. It was almost as if Lincoln's face had a blank stare. So, light had to be brought in, and as is the case today, Lincoln is portrayed with a much more dignified expression that was always intended by the artist.

When we actually pay attention and truly focus on Jesus as the light of the world, our lives reveal a different expression, one that was always intended for us. When we apply His moral example to our lives in this light, it reveals to us that Jesus obeyed His Father in Heaven perfectly, even to the point of death on the cross. When we truly apply His teaching to our lives, His light reveals to us His Word of promise, that because of His death on the Cross, our sins and the sins of the whole world are forgiven. And in the light of His resurrection, not even the darkness of death is what it once was for us.

As Jesus says in our Gospel, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (v.5). And because we see Him differently, we can see that He still works through His pastors administering God's means of grace. Led by His Spirit, He works through us as His hands and feet, as we share our faith with those around us, so that those who are born in the darkness of sin might see Christ's light shining through us.

This reminds me of a story that I came across the other day. It was about a beggar, but he was not blind. This beggar often sat across the street from an art studio. And one of the artists there, looking for someone to paint, noticed him and thought that the beggar would make an interesting subject. The beggar seemed to be a defeated man whose shoulders drooped. His eyes were downcast as he sat waiting for someone to take pity on him and give him some money.

Days later, when the artist finished, he took the painting over to the beggar so he could take a look at it. The beggar looked up and asked, “Who’s that?” And in the light, he could make out a slight resemblance to himself. Instead of a defeated man, in the painting before him he saw a person sitting upright, with squared shoulders and bright uplifted eyes, almost handsome! “Is that me? I don’t look like that.” He said to the artist. But the artist smiled and said, “I wanted you to see this because this is the person that I see in you.”

There are many who are able to be in the spotlight. When the pressure is on, they can even perform their best. And while not everyone enjoys being in the spotlight all the time. Thankfully, Jesus is the light of the world, who came to shine in the darkness. He sees who we are and helps us to see the people that He created us to be. Like the man who was born blind, we would be able to see Him clearly in the light that shines on the cross. And as a result of what He has done for us, the works of God might be seen in the expressions of our lives, both now and always.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.