

“Seeing as Children of the Light”

A Sermon By Rev. Tamera K. Jacobi

1 Samuel 16:1–13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8–14; John 9:1–41

There is a thread running through our scriptures today, a thread woven of sight and blindness, of appearance and truth, of darkness and light.

It is the story of how God sees, how we often do not, and how Christ opens our eyes so we may walk as children of the light.

In our first reading we learn that God sees differently than we do. Saul, Israel’s first king, has failed the divine calling. King Saul disobeys God in significant ways, revealing a heart more concerned with appearances and expedience than obedience.

As a result, God rejects Saul as king, not removing him immediately, but withdrawing God’s favor and long-term blessing. This leaves the nation insecure. The Philistine threat remains strong at the border, and Saul is unstable, fearful, and unpredictable. Israel needs new leadership.

Samuel becomes Israel’s **primary spiritual leader**. He delivers God’s messages to individuals and to the nation. Unlike many prophets who appear later, Samuel holds multiple leadership roles at once.

As a prophet, Samuel: Confronts Israel’s idolatry.
Calls the nation to repentance, Speaks God’s will to kings
Anoints the leaders God chooses.

Samuel who arrives at Jesse’s house with a horn of oil and a heavy heart. Saul has failed. Israel needs a new king. And Samuel, faithful as he is, still does what we all do, he looks at

Eliab, tall and strong and impressive, and thinks, “Surely this is the one.”

But God interrupts him. “The Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

How often so we still fall for appearances? We assume strength looks like size. We assume holiness looks like rule-keeping. We assume leadership looks like polish and confidence. We assume God’s favor rests on the ones who look the part.

But God chooses David, the overlooked one, the youngest, the one still smelling of sheep and pasture. God sees what no one else sees. God sees possibility where we see limitation. God sees belovedness where we see insignificance. God sees a heart ready to be shaped.

And that is good news for every one of us.

Psalm 23 reminds us that God’s way of seeing is not harsh or condemning. God is a shepherd who leads us gently, restores our souls, and walks with us through every shadowed valley.

We are not asked to see perfectly. We are asked to trust the One who does.

Sometimes the valley is dark because of circumstances.

Sometimes the valley is dark because of our own blind spots.

Either way, the Shepherd does not abandon us. The Shepherd leads us toward light.

Paul writes in Ephesians, “Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light.”

Notice, Paul does not say, “Once you were *in* darkness.” He says, “Once you *were* darkness.” Blindness is not just something that happens to us. It is something we carry within us.

And yet, in Christ, something new becomes true: We are light. We belong to the light. We are called to live in ways that reveal what is good and right and true.

This is not about following rules to earn God’s approval. This is about letting the light of Christ reshape our vision, how we see God, how we see ourselves, how we see our neighbors.

Our gospel story, “The Man Born Blind” is a story for and about all of us.

Jesus meets a man who has never seen a sunrise, never seen his mother’s face, never seen the temple he has heard so much about.

The disciples want to turn him into a theological debate: “Who sinned, this man or his parents?” But Jesus refuses to let suffering be reduced to blame.

Jesus kneels, makes mud, spreads it gently on the man’s eyes, and sends him to wash. And the man returns seeing.

But the miracle is only the beginning. The real story is what happens next. The religious leaders, keepers of the law, guardians of tradition, cannot see what God is doing right in front of them.

They cling to their rules about Sabbath. They cling to their certainty about how God works. They cling to their assumptions

about who is worthy and who is not. And in their clinging, they become blind.

Meanwhile, the man who had been blind grows clearer and clearer in his sight. He sees Jesus first as a healer, then as a prophet, then as one sent from God, and finally as Lord. His physical sight becomes a doorway to spiritual sight.

The tragedy of the story is not that the man was born blind. The tragedy is that those who claimed to see refused to be taught.

So, what does spiritual blindness look like today? Spiritual blindness is not about the eyes. It is about the heart.

It looks like judging by appearances. It looks like assuming we already know what God can or cannot do. It looks like clinging to rules so tightly that we miss the grace standing right in front of us. It looks like believing our way is the only way. It looks like refusing to be changed.

And spiritual sight, true sight, looks like openness. It looks like humility. It looks like curiosity. It looks like compassion. It looks like trusting the Shepherd who leads us. It looks like letting Christ's light reveal what we would rather keep hidden and being transformed by it.

So, how do we become children of the light? To become children of the light is not to pretend we have everything figured out.

- It is to let Jesus transform the places where we cannot see. It is to allow God to choose David when we would choose Eliab.

- It is to walk through the valley trusting the Shepherd's rod and staff.
- It is to let Christ's light expose what is broken, not to shame us, but to heal us.

It is to say, like the man in our gospel from John 9, "Lord, I believe." And then to follow. The good news is this: Christ comes to open our eyes, not once, but again and again.

Christ comes to free us from the blindness of fear, judgment, and self-protection. Christ comes to lead us into a life where we see ourselves and others through God's eyes, beloved, chosen, capable of bearing light.

May we have the courage to let Jesus touch our eyes and our hearts. May we have the humility to admit where we cannot see. And may we have the joy of walking as children of the light. Amen.