

“Into the Darkness, Finding the Light”
“The Gift of Disappearing: Defining our Delusion”

We are in the midst of the forty day journey Christians call Lent. The titles of my sermons during this Lenten season will be based on the chapter titles of a book called *Gifts of the Dark Wood*, by Eric Elnes. Lent is a dark time, it invites us into confession and looking at those parts of ourselves that do not reflect the glory and light and love of God. The darkness does not define our faith or life. This week we immerse ourselves in the story of the man born blind and how the world treats him after he is healed. The gift of disappearing allows this man to find out who he is and whose he is. ---Pastor Cindy

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: **“The Gift of Disappearing: Defining our Delusion”**

Prayer for the Week

A man who could not see received the gift of sight; O Lord, you spoke and he believed and saw the light. His joy was greater still than sight that was restored; He saw, when you had made him well, that you are Lord. Some leaders were distressed and said it was a sin, for it was on the day of rest that you healed him. They could not see the grace or know how much God cares; the lack of vision in that place was truly theirs. O Christ, you are the light to all who follow you; you give to us the gift of sight — a new world-view. When culture hems us in with values that destroy, Lord, help your church to see again your kingdom's joy (a hymn text written by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette based on the John 9 reading)

This week's sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, 03/27/17 John 9: 1-7

Jesus is “walking along” and his disciples ask what many would consider a rude and awful question. “Who sinned?” It is sometimes interesting that people treat those with disabilities as if they are invisible. The blind man does not seem to be asked to enter the conversation or even asked if he wants to be healed, but Jesus, nonetheless, makes a paste and sends him to the pool of Siloam and his sight was restored. Jesus is clear, that it is not sin that causes suffering or disability. Yet that understanding still exists. *In what way have you heard the question of sin or who to blame around events and tragedies? Have you asked that question yourself?*

Tuesday, 03/28/17 John 9: 8-18

The man’s neighbors don’t recognize him. They seem to be confused as to who this man is and who he claims to be. He says, “Yes it’s me.” And people take him to the religious authorities, he tells his story and they insult him. Just because a person is blind doesn’t mean they are dumb or are not capable of understanding things. Yet, that is how the man who was born blind was treated, by his neighbors and the religious leaders. When asked who healed him he replied “a prophet.” So they called his parents. *What lengths were people going to go in order to discredit this healing, this miracle? Why do you think they didn’t believe him?*

Wednesday, 03/29/17 John 9: 19-23

There seems to be political maneuvering early in Jesus’ ministry. The blind man’s experience is doubted because the man, Jesus, who healed him was doubted. The parents, for whatever reason, didn’t want to get involved, so they sent the religious authorities back to their son. “Ask him, he’s of age!” Ever heard the phrase “throwing someone under the bus?” I think this man’s parents just did that to him. *Why do you think so many people didn’t want to believe this man or his experience? Was it fear driven? How do you think he felt?*

Thursday, 03/30/17 John 9: 24-34

The man who was born blind was questioned again, with what might be called very leading questions. They asked him to call the man who healed him a sinner. Since he didn’t know Jesus, why would he call him a sinner? He explains how the healing happened and angers the religious authorities. After an angry conversation they expel him from the synagogue. Can you imagine? Being expelled for being healed? The man born blind had done nothing wrong, other than choose not to say what he didn’t believe was true. *Have you ever been in a situation where you feel like you are being coerced into believing or saying something you don’t believe?*

Friday, 03/31/17 John 9: 35-41

Jesus comes looking for and finds this man. Jesus could have just kept going, not concerned about the consequences of his healing ministry. Jesus reveals that he is the Christ to this man and that man believed. He received sight in so many ways. Jesus uses the image of blindness to speak of more than just physical sight, but the ability to experience God’s love and grace. *Where are you blind in your life? In what ways do you hope to receive sight through God’s grace?*