

## Winfield United Church - Reflection for March 22, 2020

### **New Vision**

John 9:1-41

So it's happened... I'm here and you are watching this from home. I think we had the strong inkling that last Sunday could be our last time to gather together for the next few weeks. It is really unbelievable how things have changed these past seven days. I wake up in the morning and remind myself that we are indeed living in a new age. Social distancing was not in our vocabulary a few short weeks ago but now it is what we are being called to do: to limit our contact with the general public, keep a safe distance from those we are interacting with, and to wash our hands like crazy. IT is a concept we are struggling to understand, let alone maintain. Many of us are feeling deeply conflicted. We are strongly encouraged to just stay home in order to protect ourselves and others from becoming infected...yet we long to be doing the things that are important to us... to be with our friends and family. But drastic times call for drastic measures and I trust we are all doing our part to minimize the spread so we can one day soon return to all the things we long to do. In the meantime, as a community we will continue to make phone calls, send emails, and use technology to look out for one another. This is a time of vulnerability. I am so grateful to you all for helping in so many ways to ensure we stay connected to one another while we wait out this time of social distancing.

The blind man in today's gospel story knew all too well how it feels to live out social distancing. He lived every day kept apart from others. I wonder what it would be like to have the experience of blindness? To have to rely on my other senses to make up for the loss of vision. To trust those in my midst for safety and security even though I cannot see them. The man who came to Jesus would have lived a most vulnerable life. He would have had difficulties finding work to support himself and

his family. He would have spent his days in the public square, perhaps begging for change or for food.

This particular day, he becomes the object of a theological discussion between Jesus and his disciples over whose fault it was that he was born without sight. Their main concern was to determine who had sinned to make this man blind. Jesus asks his name. Clopas he replies. He then proceeds to anoint the man's eyes with a mud paste and sends him to wash. The man follows Jesus' instructions; he goes to wash in the Pool of Siloam and to everyone's amazement, his sight is returned.

We do not understand how this can happen, how dirt and water mixed together returns a blind man's sight. But I think what we can appreciate this morning is the restoration that Jesus' actions brought the man. Jesus saw him as a human being, a child of God. He saw beyond his impairment and the potential that lies within him. No longer would Clopas be on the fringe of his community. He would no longer have to sit in the square and beg day after day. He no longer would experience the intense vulnerability of personal security being blind previously brought him. He would no longer be invisible.

But it is not only Clopas who had sight returned. The disciples also were given new eyes for seeing. Jesus throws out the long-held belief that physical disability was the result of God's punishment or disfavor towards an individual or parents. The disciples received the gift of acceptance of one whom they perceived as invisible. They gained the insight necessary to no longer exclude those with physical impediments but to receive them as full members of the community. They were given the capacity to view people beyond labels and judgments and see them as beloved children of God.

And what about the rest of us? How will we "see" things differently during this time of social distancing and in the what's to come following

the virus? Will we have new visions about what is truly important in our physical and spiritual lives?

We are living in a fearful and unknown time. We have a virus to fight and wonder what it will mean if masses of the population become sick at once. How long will it be before we personally are affected by COVID – 19? When we aren't considering this we wonder about our jobs, paying our bills, and retirement incomes. We trust in our authorities that we will be cared for and looked after in an equitable way. If there is one thing this time of social distancing has shown me is that we are all the same... we are all human facing the same worries and concerns. It's like a great leveler. But maybe our story today of the man born blind, as crazy as it sounds, can be an example to us. We are at our best when we strive to eradicate injustices, extend love, express compassion. When we do these things, we put ourselves on the side of healing... a good place to be indeed that might just see us through this time of social isolation and sickness. May this be our work, the church's work in the days and weeks to come.

Amen and Amen.