

## REFLECTIONS FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT ~ 19 March 2023

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

On this mid-point in our Lenten journey, God continues to surprise us and to reveal to us the unexpected – this day in light, seeing, clay and water – all gifts of God's creation. Indeed, light is the first gift of creation as described in Genesis 1, "God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Gen 1:3).



In the first reading today taken from 1 Samuel, God sends the prophet Samuel to find the one to replace Saul as king since Saul was not walking in the way of the Lord. Samuel goes to the house of Jesse and meets each of Jesse's seven sons, all of whom are tall and handsome. None of these sons were the chosen one as Samuel said, "The Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Sam 16:9). The youngest son David is tending the sheep, the lowliest task and, therefore, the

one that is given to the least important person. God speaks the unexpected words through Samuel, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one" (1 Sam 16:12). David will prove to be flawed in many ways, but he does follow the way of the Lord and repents each time he fails in his commitment. God's way of looking and seeing is not our way – "The Lord looks on the heart." The Uniting Church minister, Rosemary Broadstock, helps us find the courage to accept this truth for us as David did for himself:

God is blind. . . to outward appearance, to what seems to be,  
To labels, to judgement by prejudices  
God looks on the heart.  
There, God has eyes wide open.  
Are our eyes wide shut?

When I look at God's creation every day,  
The stars, the hills, a blue sky, fresh rain  
Do I see?  
When I look at another  
Do I take the time to see? to listen? to appreciate? to marvel?

When I look at the people of other countries  
When I look at an immigrant, a refugee  
Do I see God's child?

When I look at the cross, do I see the courage, the power In the face of God  
When I look at the cross, do I see the message "For You."

Rejoice! God sees beyond all fault, all mistakes, all past, all facades.  
God sees the child God made and says,

“For you are beautiful, Son of Adam  
 For you are beautiful, daughter of Eve.”  
 May we be blind as God is blind  
 May we be sighted as God is sighted.  
 And, as we learn what really matters, may we see what God has to say to us.

**Beside Still Waters, Debra J. Sepos**



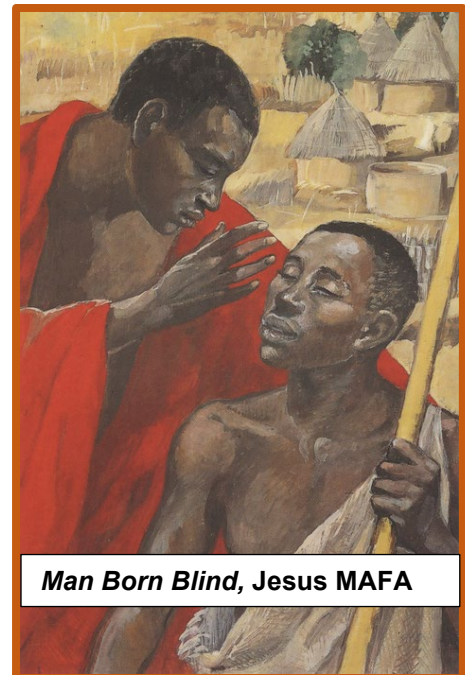
Psalm 23, the most loved of all the psalms, takes the lowliest task of shepherding and makes it the image for God’s care for us – once again the unexpected happens! We never think of this when we proclaim this psalm – instead we take it for granted without further thought. The second image for God in this psalm is equally unexpected, that of the mother in the household, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies” (Ps 23:5). The lowly shepherd and the loving mother are two images of God in this psalm that touches the hearts and spirits of all who pray it and sing it! And it never dawns on us how scandalous

this is – two of the least important ones are the images of our beloved, compassionate, caring, trusted God! Without our being conscious of it, we have been seeing with the eyes of the heart!

The writer of the letter to the Ephesians tells us, “Now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light – for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true” (Eph 5 :8-9). Note that the scripture does not say that being good and right and true makes us children of light. Rather all that is good and right and true is the fruit of the light. God creates us as children of light. We choose whether or not to be the light for others, for Earth, and for ourselves. The spiritual writer, Judy Cannato, in her *Field of Compassion* says so beautifully, “To see ourselves as we truly are – a wisp of love itself – is perhaps our deepest fear. But it is also our greatest grace. If we are to be the new human, we must begin by embracing love, which always seeks to incarnate itself. Love is enfleshed everywhere. Everywhere the Holy One is shouting and whispering, ‘Let me love you.’ And all that is asked of us is to receive. In reality, that is our life’s work. Nothing more, and certainly nothing less.”

The story in today’s reading from John’s Gospel involving Jesus and the man born blind is told as an intense drama. Having just declared, “I am the light of the world,” Jesus then makes a dramatic gesture, “he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes” (Jn 9:5-6). In that unexpected moment, Jesus, Earth, and water are in harmony – the holy, the habitat, and the human become one. And the blind man’s sight is restored.

Veronica Lawson rsm summaries the unexpected in this drama, “In the common estimation, the man was blind, so he or his parents must have sinned. Not so, according to Jesus. From the perspective of the authorities, Jesus heals on the Sabbath and is therefore a sinner. Not so, from Jesus’ point of view. The man was born blind and so needs others to speak for him. Not so, say his parents, he can speak for



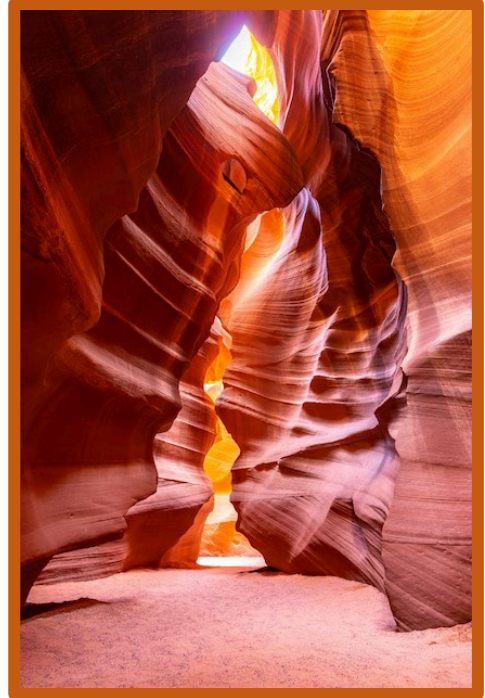
**Man Born Blind, Jesus MAFA**

himself. He does speak for himself and quite eloquently, to the chagrin of the religious authorities. He presents them with the truth about Jesus but they refuse to accept the word of an outcast. Their reaction is violent: they drive him out. But Jesus goes in search of him and leads him to yet deeper levels of faith and understanding.”

The Camaldolese Benedictine, Bruno Barnhart, reinforces the insight that the now-seeing man has into his own goodness and light, “A comedy begins when the man returns, seeing, to those who had known him when he was blind. They seem not to recognize him; they argue about his identity. Finally, he himself affirms, ‘I am’ (hoti ego eimi). He has received more than sight, this man who now sees. Burning and shining within him now is something of the one who gave him his sight, and who had identified himself with those syllables reserved to God. And yet he knows only that it was the man Jesus who had given him his sight; he knows neither who Jesus is, nor what is that light, now within him, in which he himself is.”

Like the man born blind, we do not always know who Jesus is or what the light is. We cannot always find the confidence to truly believe, “Burning and shining within me now is something of the one who gave me my sight.” Yet we do trust that the one who is the light has entrusted us to be the light whenever or with whomever we share our life’s journey. The Canadian-Jewish poet and singer, Leonard Cohen, gives us comfort and hope in his “Anthem”:

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That’s how the light gets in.



Let us take time in this Lenten week to remember that we are the light for so many. Let us rejoice and give thanks to our God who looks on our hearts not on our appearance. Let us consciously accept God’s invitation to be light for our world!

