This morning, you woke up. If your alarm was beeping at you, you reached over to shut it off. Maybe you grabbed your glasses off the night stand and stumbled into the bathroom where you went through some sort of morning routine. Then, maybe you had a bite to eat while your read the newspaper or the back of the cereal box. Eventually, you put on some clothes, hopped in the car and drove to church. If you were driving, you kept your eye on the road, if you were riding, you probably just looked around or played with your cell phone. When you got here, you stepped out of your car, walked into church and found your seat. You were able to do all of these things because you are able to see. Now imagine for a moment that you could not. Imagine that you were blind. Imagine how different your life would be.

Our sense of sight is one of those things that people don't really appreciate until they no longer have it. There is another type of sight that can be taken for granted: the spiritual sight that God gives us through faith. John 9 speaks to both of these types of sight. Jesus gave sight to a blind man’s eyes and sight to his soul - two miracles of sight. These miracles will offer us refreshment for our Lenten journey as we experience again the joy of seeing.

John 9 is a fascinating account that has way more in it that we have time to talk about. We could spend 20 minutes just on the question Jesus’ disciples asked him as they walked along and saw a blind man. They assumed that God was punishing him for something he or his parents had done so they asked: Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

Just imagine that you are this blind man sitting on the side of the road and you overhear this conversation. It is probably not the first time the thought has crossed your mind that you are blind because God is punishing you. It really hurts you to know that others assume you are guilty of some horrible sin. But then you are shocked when you hear Jesus’ answer: It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that God’s works might be revealed in connection with him. And even more shocked when you hear Jesus spit on the ground, mix his saliva with the dirt and then put the mud on your eyes before he tells you: Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.

And you do not waste time asking questions. You go. You wash. You see Jesus’ first miracle of the day.

But the blind man was not the only blind person in this account. When he came back after washing in the pool of Siloam, everyone who had known him was amazed. They took him to the religious leaders to confirm that a miracle had occurred. When those leaders - the Pharisees - heard the story, they could not believe it. The miracle had been done on the Sabbath Day when no work was supposed to be done. They did not believe Jesus was from God because he did not keep the Sabbath regulations the way they falsely interpreted them. This left them in an uncomfortable position because they understood that no sinner could do a miracle like that. At the same time, they did not want to admit that Jesus was actually from God. The evidence was standing in plain sight and they chose to deny it. They chose unbelief. They themselves could not see Jesus for who he was because they were blinded by their unbelief.

And before we say, How could they have been so stubborn? we probably should examine our own reaction to Jesus’ miracle. When you have heard the accounts of Jesus’ miracles enough times, it is easy for them to just become nice stories; a blind guy got his sight,
how wonderful. We have to remember that Jesus did this miracle also for us and he had it recorded for us for a reason. If a blind man were healed during our service today, I think we would all sit up. We would all listen up. We would leave church today and we would not doubt that God is really in control of our lives even when we are sick or even when things are tough. We would not question our faith when it is challenged by a teacher or the latest anti-Christian news article.

The Pharisees show us this morning what spiritual blindness is: they saw the evidence and they refused to believe. What would be the difference between us and them if we hear about Jesus’ miracle and fail to put our full faith in him? Unbelief is blind. It looks but never sees. When the Pharisees finally asked the healed man what he thought about Jesus, he told them: He is a prophet. But they were blind to the truth. You were entirely born in sinfulness! Yet you presume to teach us? And they threw him out. Jesus then worked his second miracle of the day. We are told: Jesus heard that they had thrown him out. When he found him, he asked, Do you believe in the Son of God? Who is he, sir, the man replied, that I may believe in him? Jesus answered, You have seen him, and he is the very one who is speaking with you. Then he said, Lord, I believe! And he knelt down and worshiped him.

Which was the greater of the two miracles? Which displayed God’s power more? Put the two on TV (giving sight to the blind man and giving spiritual sight to the spiritually blind man) and the first miracle would grab a lot more attention. Wow, a blind man gained his sight! Which did the blind man appreciate more? Maybe his eyes served him for another 20-30 years, but eventually they went dark again. The greater miracle that day was opening his spiritual eyes to recognize and believe in Jesus as Lord. The greater miracle done that day was the faith Jesus worked in that man’s heart.

God has opened the eyes of faith of every believer to recognize Jesus for who he is. We see Jesus as our God and our Savior. Yet I think we can admit that there is a tendency to take our spiritual sight for granted once we have had it for a while. The newness wares off and unless my faith continually finds rest in Jesus and his Word, my spiritual eyes grow tired and lazy. Spiritual blindness does not return overnight. The eyes of faith close slowly, so slowly at times that the person does not ever recognize it. The faith that God opens our spiritual eyes with sees Jesus, loves Jesus, wants to serve Jesus, worships Jesus, not because we have to, but because, like we will sing at end of service: Amazing grace - how sweet the sound - that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.

A person who has taken his eyes off of Jesus is left with a blind faith. This kind of faith only knows the facts: I know who Jesus is and what he has done. But it is a blind faith. A person with that faith may even say, I believe, but in his life he sees no need for Jesus, does not love Jesus, does not serve or worship Jesus. Like the Pharisees, Satan has this person convinced that he has sight, when he is really blind. There is a warning for us this morning, Jesus tells us: For judgment I came into this world, in order that those who do not see will see, and those who do see will become blind.

There is no reason to be blind. Jesus has opened our eyes to see him for who he truly is. If we ever begin to take our spiritual sight for granted, it is time to look back to the one who has given us sight and we trust in his forgiveness. And like Jesus used simple things to give the blind man sight, he uses simple things to restore and strengthen our spiritual sight. Take note of how Jesus operates. With this man he used some mud he made with his spit and a simple command to wash, and the man was healed.

To give us spiritual sight, Jesus uses the simple words of a book, the Bible. He commands us to be washed in baptism. He uses normal bread and wine to give his very body
and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. The simple faith building tools that Jesus gives us do not attract the attention of crowds. They do not excite a lot of people. They are not new and improved for our American culture. But Jesus says they give us sight. And with our eyes opened we see clearly our Savior’s love for us; that he would love the lost so much that he willingly went to the cross so that by his sacrifice, God would become permanently blind to all of our sins. That is the amazing sight we see every day through our eyes of faith.

Now with our eyes opened, Jesus has work for us to do. Jesus says: I must do the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Jesus had work to do – the work of saving sinners. But he has also given those whose eyes he has opened work to do. In Christ’s church, there is no such thing as standing on the sidelines, being a bench warmer. We are all in the game. We all participate. Not in the same roles or the same ways, but the work belongs to all of us. And there is urgency for this work, we can only do it while it is day. In other words, right now is the time to get busy - not tomorrow.

God has given all of us time and talents to use to further his kingdom here and abroad. We do not all have the same time available. We do not all have the same talents. We all serve God when we faithfully carry out our individual vocations. But also remember that the work of this congregation is all of our work. If you cannot play piano, maybe you can serve as an usher. If you cannot help out with Sunday School or Vacation Bible School, maybe you can pray for others. If you cannot cook, maybe you can help with evangelism efforts.

Jesus says that the work belongs to all of us. Consider how you might participate in the work of building up this body of believers called Trinity/St. John Lutheran. How can we raise up the next generation of believers. How can we reach the spiritually blind in our community? How can you help?

Jesus has given us blind sinners sight and the opportunity to serve him. Treasure your eyes of faith and keep them fixed on your Savior. See that our Lenten journey does not end at the cross, but at the empty tomb of Easter. See that the journey of this life does not end in darkness, but in light. Amen.

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