

In tonight's gospel lesson, which was the first part of Sunday's gospel lesson, we read that as Jesus was passing by, he *saw* a man who was sightless from birth. When the eyes of Christ saw his blindness, Jesus had compassion on him, and without asking the blind man for his permission, Jesus went over to him and began the process of giving sight to this blind man.

Many of the healings that Jesus did began simply with him *seeing* the need with the compassionate eyes of Christ. Many times, Jesus responded to the needs of others without even being asked, simply because he saw, and he loved, and he acted out that love.

When the widow of Nain was burying her only son, Jesus *saw* her and had compassion on her and so he raised her son to life. When Jesus entered Peter's house, he *saw* Peter's mother-in-law lying sick with a fever and so he healed her.

Yes, the eyes of Christ often saw the need for healing, which caused Jesus to respond with sympathy, tenderness, and understanding by initiating the forgiveness of sins and by healing the affliction. The eyes of Christ saw a lot of misery in the lives of people in Galilee, and he responded with concern, mercy, and grace.

When he was walking about, going from town to town, preaching and teaching and healing, he saw the crowds that had followed him, and he said, "I have compassion for them, for they are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd."

Tonight, as we gather together to consider the miracles of love and grace that resulted from what the eyes of Christ saw, we are reminded that we gather together as the Church. And to be the Church means to be members of the one Body of Christ. And to be a member of the Body of Christ means that we are called to live out the various parts of the Body of Christ, parts such as Christ's feet, and hands, and mouth, and ears. The past four weeks, we've explored the call to be those parts of the Body of Christ in the world. Tonight, as we explore the eyes of Christ, we are called to think about the eyesight of Jesus as if it were our own.

Our eyesight is a great gift from God. People who have the full use of all five of the physical senses generally acknowledge that if they lost any one sensory perception, they would miss their eyesight the most. So much that we know and love comes to us through our eyes.

With our eyes, we see the beauty of a sunrise and the splendor of a sunset. We recognize the vastness of the night sky filled with sparkling stars. We look upon the delicate beauty of a flower bathed in morning dew.

These are things the eyes of Christ saw also.

With our eyes we enjoy the satisfaction of a task completed after much effort, the pleasure of a job well-done. Our eyes behold the smiles of our loved ones. They can watch with delight the friskiness of a new baby colt frolicking in a field. Our eyes shines with elation at the ruggedness of a view from a mountain top. These are things the eyes of Christ saw also.

We gaze with joy upon the fresh, new green grass that comes springing up from the ground after a long, cold winter. We behold the fury and power of a thunderstorm as it comes sweeping over the plains. We witness the wonder of the hush that comes over a baby as it sleeps in the arms of a parent. These are things the eyes of Christ saw also.

Our eyes savor the sight of a sparkling stream of diamonds as water in a brook tumbles over rocks in the sunshine. With our eyes we ponder the calm stillness of a fog as mist clings to the trees. Our sight gives us the amiable cheerfulness of a campfire shared with a circle of friends. These are things the eyes of Christ saw also.

The eyes of Christ saw the same variety of beauty that our eyes see. But they also saw the same ugliness and violence that our eyes see.

The eyes of Christ saw the hate and rejection that brothers and sisters have for one another. Jesus recognized the cruelty that pent-up hate can unleash on someone. His eyes discerned the dishonesty, deception, and deceitfulness of people. They beheld the squalor and filthiness of the poor whom he loved. The eyes of Christ observed the selfishness and pride of the rich, and he loved them, too.—Yet, the eyes of Christ were able to see more than the temporary and frail objects that our eyes see. The eyes of Christ were able to look beyond this temporary world to the Kingdom of God.

Jesus proclaimed, “Those who see me, see the one who sent me. All who have seen me have seen the Father.” Even as he was crucified, as he saw the soldiers dividing his garments, and saw his mother’s grief, he still could see the value of each person there. He saw them as children of God to the end, because he said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

When we are faced with a serious situation and struggling with a difficult decision, perhaps we can remember how the eyes of Christ saw his tormentors. We could ask ourselves, “What would the eyes of Christ see in this dilemma?”

When we see those who oppose us or dislike us, we could ask, “How would the eyes of Christ see this person?”

We do need to see more clearly, not with our self-centered and self-oriented eyes, but with the new eyes of Christ, which see the hope of God’s kingdom.

We need to see Jesus dying on the cross for us.

When we see him on the cross, we see the Father.

When we see the eyes of Christ closing in agony, we see the love of God.

When we see him bleeding and dying, we see the power of righteousness over sin.

When we see the eyes of Christ closed in the darkness of death and in the tomb, we see the power of love over hate.

When we see the eyes of Christ opened in the resurrection, we see the power of life over death.

When we see with the eyes of Christ, we see the promise that Jesus makes to us, the promise that he speaks in the Gospel of John, when he says, “You have sorrow now; but *I will see you again* and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”

Responding to his promise, we look up to Jesus in faith, trusting that he does make our joy complete, and that as members of the Body of Christ, we will fully see the Kingdom of God when we look with the eyes of Christ. Be the eyes of Christ. Look and see.

Amen