

## Sermon Transcript for August 15, 2021, by Pastor Stisser

A few weeks ago, when I was preparing to write the sermons for these weeks when Pastor Poock was gone, to fill in for him, I was looking for my appointment book so I could find out just what days he was going to be gone and what days I needed to prepare sermons for. I looked everywhere and it was nowhere. I couldn't find it. I got frustrated. Chris knows I don't really. That's an inside joke. But I got frustrated and I started accusing Christine, my own wife, for stealing my appointment book. I asked her, "Where is it? What did you do with it?" In her usual calm voice she said, as she pointed to it, "It's right there on the desk." Oh... Well... I would add in parentheses, although she didn't say it, right there on the desk, stupid, because that's how I felt. There, yes, there it was. No more than three inches from my hand. I'd been looking, but in my mind, I was so consumed with where it could have been, or should have been, that even with it right in front of me, I didn't even see it. See, that's a good introduction to our Lord. God is always right in front of us. He's always there. But when we try to see Him, according to the standards of the world, or when sin clouds our view of God, we can't know the hope to which He has called us, as it says in verse 18. When sin blocks the Holy Spirit from giving us the wisdom to know Him better. Using Paul's vision language, we would call sin a cataract over the soul, glaucoma of the heart, or even spiritual astigmatism. Any way we choose to describe it, sin blocks our view, our knowledge of God, our relationship with God, and the spiritual blessings that He would give us, that He wants to give us.

We learned earlier, Cain killed his brother Abel, out of anger and jealousy, in Genesis 4. I can imagine Cain tried to hide his brother's body somewhere so he wouldn't be caught. God wouldn't see him. Maybe he put his brother's body under the corn stalks or the hay or grass in the field and covered him up. Maybe threw his body in a ravine. What I'm pretty sure of is, that he didn't call the undertaker. That was supposed to be a joke. Thank you. In any case, God comes along to Cain and says, "Where is Abel your brother?" Now this story really shows us how we get spiritual astigmatism. Do you know how stupid Cain was? Guess what he answers God. Those immortal words that we still use sometimes to cover our own sins. He said to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Wow, what courage you had, to say that to God. God saw all along the sins of Cain. He knew what was going on. He confronted Cain with his disobedience, and He made Cain see the sins of his heart and the sins of his hands.

What do we do to cover our own sins that we think God won't see them? We try to hide from God? What kind of glaucoma or cataracts do we invent, so that we think we're safe from God? He won't see us now. Seeing spiritual truths really has nothing to do with our physical eyes, but it has everything to do with our soul and how do you transplant your soul? In verse four of the text, Paul says that we should be holy and blameless in God's sight. Well, how do we get blameless in God's sight? In spite of our sinfulness, God chooses to see us in grace and mercy. It's all about God, see, not us. When God looks at us with His heart, it is a look that gives life. God sees us clothed in garments of forgiveness because His eyes are fixed upon His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross. God loves us so much in His heart, that He even sent His own Son, as a sacrifice for the people whom He sees who need Him so badly. So our being saved depends not on our eyesight, not on our heart and especially not on our good works, but His. God wants to rescue us. When we repent, when maybe you're all tied up in a crisis, personal crisis, home crisis, and you can't get anything out, but "Oh God, forgive me." That's enough. God forgives. He loves to forgive us and renew us and restore us.

Peter teaches us, "But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. For it is written, be holy." For it is written, "Be holy because I am holy." Seeking to please God in our conduct and through worship, we can

see God in His glory and mercy that He would have us enjoy all simply miraculously through Word and Sacrament.

If you want a glimpse of hearts that see, as it said earlier, remember, or maybe I should just say, [let me] remind you of the Gospel reading for the second Sunday after Christmas. There we see Simeon and Anna, a righteous and devout pair. Each has been waiting patiently for years, year-after-year, for the redemption. Simeon has seen religious fervor come and go. Anna has seen the so-called prophets rise and fall. At this time, their hearts have been on the watch for the Lord's Christ, the fulfillment of Simeon's promise, and the answer to Anna's prayer takes more than simple eyesight to see. They saw the Messiah for many years in faith only, but they believed. And then on that special day in the temple, they got to see Him with their own eyes, physically see Him and because of their faith, God had looked upon them with blessings for many years, as they waited to see Him.

But what we need from God is His spiritual wisdom; the Holy Spirit's revelation of knowledge of Him. It saddens me to hear so many people talk and I know some people personally, "Oh yeah, I believe in God. That's all I need." Well, I ask them, "What do you know about God?" "I don't know. Nothing really." You see they really don't know God. They don't really have a knowledge of Him. They don't have a relationship with Him. He's not really their God because they really just don't know Him. They know there's a God out there somewhere and that's it.

But God gives us spiritual eyesight to see Him, to know Him, to be able to love Him intimately. He makes us see beyond our physical eyes. He removes the cataracts from our hearts and gives us "heart-sight", I would call it. We are unable to see the heavenly realms, but still live down in this earth. We see God with our eyes filled with our faith heart because our physical eyes constantly in this world, the central dark world, focus on, gaze upon, death, dying, hatred, envy, personal greed and gain, and how many other sins do we want to add onto that list? We could talk for hours about our sins. So we need, for that reason, we need God's power to help us see our neighbors, our world, even ourselves, with our eyes of a heart renewed by God's love and the constant forgiveness in Jesus Christ. We may say, "I see it, pastor. I believe."

So where do we go next? Look closely again, at what Paul says in our Ephesian texts in verse 17, where he tells us the glorious Father may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation. Two of the most important things we can possess in this life. Paul closes his eyes. He shuts out the world and looks to God to supply all his needs. And so too, God nurtures us, equips us and strengthens us, in Word and Sacrament, as the Holy Spirit works in that and through that, the Word and Sacrament.

We know the past is impossible to do over. Many people try but you just can't do over the past. So give your sins to God and Jesus Christ, with joy that you're relieved of that burden of sin. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the power to stop that long festering sin. And then rejoice in this day because it is the day the Lord has made for you. This is the day He has forgiven you and forgotten your sins. Some people say, "I forgive you, but I'll never forget." All that means is they really are not forgiving. God truly, truly forgets, when you ask for forgiveness. Be glad then and rejoice in our loving God.

Paul continues, "I also pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you." There's something about being on a journey where the end is in sight. On my days off, I like to work on projects with my hands. To me it's peaceful, it's spiritual, refreshing, to look at something that needs fixing or something imagining in my mind, something I want to build and design it and

to make a project. So I start the project and as I work on it, I watch it come to completion as the hands accomplish the work with God-given talent.

That's our journey with the life of Christ; life with Christ. We can see through the trials and tribulation and vision it all coming together with Christ in control. And for us, our journey is about hope and hope is the faith in those things that are not seen. Hope is about being at peace and that faith, knowing that Christ, in Christ we have that heart-sight that can see to the end of our journey. In verse 18, the text Paul helps us visualize the end of our journey where we receive the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints. Our hearts see that, keep us from getting bitter toward the life of sin. Our hearts that see, build us up in His wisdom and in the revelation and glorious inheritance of the life to come.

My friends, let us take a moment now. close our eyes to the world and we pray:

Dear God, I pray at this moment, You would remove the glaucoma from our hearts that blinds us to accepting You in faith. The astigmatism that distorts our vision of You. That we see You only in the way You want us to see You. Open our hearts to see and receive Your glory and wisdom. Maybe there are some right here today who need Your empowerment of faith, so we pray that You would translate these word pictures given here in this message, into solid growing faith in You. Holy Spirit, come upon those who need You, that You would teach Your wisdom to the ones who surely need faith in Your Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The world does not see You, so let us be Your instruments to bring the light of Christ into this dark unseen world. Amen and Amen.