

4 March 2020  
Lent 1 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“Vision Problems: Far-sightedness”  
Text: Isaiah 58:1-9a; Mark 10:35-38a; 13:24-37

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Vision problems. It is the rare person who has natural 20/20 vision, who can see perfectly without glasses, contact lenses, or lasik surgery. Most of us need help. The sin that will eventually bring our death has effected our vision, too.

Last Wednesday night, Ash Wednesday, we considered the vision problem of *astigmatism* - when the curvature of your eye is off and as a result, everything is blurry. Our curvature is off when we are consumed with looking at ourselves, when we are *curvatus in se*, curved in on ourselves. When I only have eyes for me. When that happens we do not see God, or His Word, or others, or the future, clearly.

Tonight, we consider another common vision problem: *far-sightedness*. Far-sightedness is when you are able to see things that are far away clearly, but things that are up close are blurry. And in the story of Jesus' passion, and even for longer than that, it is *the disciples* who often show that they are far-sighted - focusing on and consumed about the future, while the here-and-now is blurry and overlooked by them.

So we hear about when people were bringing little children to Jesus. The disciples rebuked them. Jesus was far too busy to bother with them! Jesus had more important things to do - Saviour-things!

When a Canaanite woman pleads with Jesus to help her demon-oppressed daughter, the disciples again urge Jesus to send her away. She's causing a disruption! And she's hurting our ears. Don't bother Jesus.

When the time for His crucifixion begins to draw near and Jesus sets His face toward Jerusalem, He and the disciples are passing through a village of the Samaritans, but the Samaritans don't receive Him. So James and John ask Jesus if they should tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them! (As if they could!) A little divine, end times judgment should do the trick.

And then as we heard tonight from St. Mark, James and John do it again as they ask Jesus for the positions on His right and His left in His glory. Whether they are thinking of glory in a kingdom on earth or glory in the heavenly kingdom - or both! - they're thinking

ahead, looking to the future. Far-sighted.

Now, there's nothing wrong with thinking ahead and looking to the future and preparing for it. That is often the responsible thing to do. But it is a problem if we do so and miss the here and now. If we miss what is right under our noses.

Christians are sometimes accused of this - and perhaps justly, at times. That we have our head in the clouds and not on the earth. That we are so heavenly-minded that we are no earthly good.

So what does Jesus say? How does He correct the far-sightedness of the disciples? And how does He show His own, clear 20/20 vision?

Well, first of all, to go through the instances just mentioned, Jesus doesn't do what the disciples suggest. He doesn't rebuke the parents for bringing children to Him, He rebukes the disciples and welcomes the children. He doesn't send the Canaanite woman away, He helps her. He doesn't give the order for a little end times judgment upon the Samaritans. And He tells James and John who want those places of honor, ***you don't know what you are asking*** . . . You have no idea what that means; what my glory looks like.

Because, really, in a sense, they've been in those places all along. They've just missed it. They've been too busy being far-sighted. Jesus has been *gloriously* blessing the children, healing the sick and demon-oppressed, and caring for all. And that little end times fire and judgment upon the Samaritans? Jesus was going to gloriously take that upon Himself on the cross, for the rebellion of not just the Samaritans, but all people - including James and John.

So, Jesus goes on to say, when the end comes, you'll know. It's not going to be a secret. There will be signs. Clear signs. You'll know.

And in the meantime, before the end comes, Jesus says, just do what you're given to do. The example Jesus gave was of a man going on a journey, leaving his servants home, each with their tasks. Faithful servants don't spend their days worrying about the master of the house coming home - being far-sighted - they just do what they're given to do. And if they do, they'll be ready for the homecoming.

So too Jesus' disciples, and us. There is a glorious future waiting for us with the Lord. There is no question about that. Jesus has come to provide that for us, and He has gone to prepare a place for us. Jesus' death and resurrection mean the forgiveness of our sins and the promise of everlasting life. It is finished. Done. Complete. Fulfilled. Jesus has done it and you can't add to it. There is nothing more to be done for it. Your future is secure.

In the meantime, before the end comes, don't be looking so far-sightedly to the glory that

is coming that you miss the glory that is here-and-now. James and John asked for those places of glory beside Jesus, and didn't realize they already had them. Do we make the same mistake and fail to see the glory here-and-now? Jesus' glory wasn't only in the future and in His gloriously being glorious in glory, but using His glory to serve and help others. And the lower, the needier, the more helpless the better, and the more glorious. And so the place where we see the glory of Jesus most clearly? When He hung on the cross. There is the glory of His love shining through for us.

So now, with our future secure, we can be glorious now in the same way. Using our glory as sons and daughters of God for others. Doing what we've been given to do. Or as we heard from the prophet Isaiah: don't fast, don't deny yourself, for yourselves or for God. That's not what God wants. When you fast, do so for others. Loose the bonds of wickedness, share your bread with the hungry, take care of the homeless, cover the naked. Not because you have to, but because you can. Because you're glorious. Glorious children of God.

And when Jesus comes again, you'll not only know, you'll be ready. And the glory you'll see then is the same glory that you know now - of the God who loves you and has given Himself for you; of the God who is all about you. You'll see it all clearly - 20/20 vision. For no more sin, no more death, no more vision problems. Only Jesus.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.