

1 April 2020  
Lent 5 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“Vision Problems: Cataracts”

Text: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11; 5:1-7; Matthew 26:57-58, 69-75

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

We’ve considered a number of vision problems this Lenten season. *Physical* vision problems that also effect us *spiritually* - ways that our eyes of faith, or spiritual vision, is sometimes not right. Not 20/20. And how Jesus is the cure we need, the healing we need, to correct our vision, our faith, that it be right again.

The final vision problem we’re considering tonight is *cataracts*. And the things about cataracts is that they sneak up on you. They develop slowly. The lens of your eye begins to get cloudy, but not all at once. It happens so slowly and gradually that you don’t notice it. You get used to it as it progresses and gets worse until one day it gets so bad that you realize *something is really wrong*.

I think that’s what happened to Peter. Peter is probably the best known disciple, and the most beloved because of his shortcomings and failures. You know, he engages his mouth before his mind. He puts his foot in his mouth so often that he probably had athlete’s tongue! He gets himself into situations.

Peter is the one who tells Jesus that surely, He will never be crucified! At which Jesus calls him satan. Peter is the one bold enough to get out of a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee and walk on the water! But also the one who sinks. Peter is the one who draws his sword in the Garden of Gethsemane and has to be rebuked by Jesus. And as we heard tonight, Peter is the one who denies Jesus. Three times.

I think what happened to Peter is *spiritual* cataracts. He can see. He knows Jesus. He has faith. He is one of the three disciples in Jesus’ inner circle, along with James and John. Peter’s not a bad guy . . . but I think without even realizing it, his spiritual vision began to get cloudy, and it became hard to see things as they really are, so that by the time of Jesus’ arrest, Peter is afraid of a little girl who questions him about Jesus. Is this the same Peter who moments before drew his sword on the soldiers and guards who came out to arrest Jesus? One and the same. But he has a vision problem. One that’s been growing, until finally, when he denies even knowing Jesus three times, he knows *something’s really wrong*. And he breaks down and weeps.

Peter needs surgery. Spiritual surgery. And Jesus will do that for him later, after His

resurrection, helping him to see and restoring him and his faith.

But Peter's not the only one. We heard tonight also from the book of Ecclesiastes, written by Solomon. *King Solomon*. The wisest man in the world! Whose wisdom, Scripture says, was unrivaled and would never again be equaled. Which is quite a claim. And while Solomon starts off good, he gets spiritual cataracts. Maybe it's his wealth. Maybe it's his power. Maybe it's his wisdom. Maybe it's all his wives and concubines. Maybe it's the false gods and false worship his wives and concubines brought into his house with them. Maybe it was all of the above. But by the end of his life, in his golden years, suddenly Solomon looked around and realized that *something's really wrong*. Everything he was doing, everything he was after, everything he thought was so important . . . it's not! It's all vanity, meaningless. What had gone wrong? All these things in his life had clouded out his vision of God and His love.

We should take a lesson here. For if this could happen to men like Solomon and Peter, it can certainly happen to us. And it not only can, it does. And gradually, so that we do not even notice until *something's really wrong*.

So what is it that clouds your faith, your spiritual vision? Maybe it's your work that crowds out Jesus and what He would do in your life. Maybe it's a boyfriend or girlfriend that has caught your eye. Maybe it's that thing in your life that you're chasing after, that you want more than anything in this world! Maybe it's all this virus stuff that has you scared and that is threatening to suffocate you. What is it for you that is clouding and darkening your faith in Jesus? That has, perhaps, made you like Peter, and brought you to the point of denying Jesus in your words or in how you live. Or that has, perhaps, made you like Solomon, and you look around at your life and wonder how you got here? How did Jesus get so far away and cloudy? You didn't even notice . . . and it's not just that something isn't quite right . . . *something's really wrong* . . .

Now if you have physical cataracts, you can go to the eye doctor and have surgery. Both only Jesus is the great physician of both body and soul. And He makes house calls. He comes to His Church with the healing medicine of His forgiveness, to restore our faith, our spiritual sight, again. To clear out the clouds of sin that have darkened our faith, and shine the light of His love on us again. And that you don't wait until you realize that *something's really wrong* in your life! But long before that, **repent**. Don't wait. Confess the little sins before they become big sins. Confess the infrequent sins before they become frequent sins. Confess your careless and impulsive sins before they become habitual sins. Confess your weakness before it becomes defiance. Confess before you become blind. For that is ultimately what Satan has in mind for you. Not just that you do this sin or that, but that you become blind. Blind to God. Blind to His love and mercy for you. Blind to His forgiveness. Blind to your Saviour.

And remember, the thing about cataracts is that they sneak up on you. You may never see

your blindness coming . . .

So this Lenten season comes every year to call us to repent. To clear out the clouds of sin that perhaps have accumulated this year, and see right again.

To see Jesus on the cross for you.

To see Jesus in the font for you.

To see Jesus on the altar for you.

To see Jesus in His Word for you.

To see Jesus bearing all your sins on the cross. Every last one of them.

To see Jesus condemned with your condemnation.

To see Jesus dying your death.

To see Jesus risen from the dead.

To see Jesus as the one who truly cares for you.

To see Jesus as He continues to care and provide for you.

To see Jesus as our help in every trouble, even the one all of us are languishing in now; or the one that's plaguing just you.

To see Jesus as your strength in weakness, your refuge from danger, and your life in death.

To see Jesus as your health in sickness, your hope in despair, and your comfort in sadness.

To see Jesus as the one with you in isolation.

To see Jesus as the faithful one. Faithful to His Father and faithful to you.

Even when we are less than faithful to Him.

Next week, we're going to once again hear of that faithfulness in our Holy Week services. We'll hear of His sacrifice. We'll hear of His forgiveness. We'll hear of His unequalled love. All of this for you and me. You and me! And we'll marvel. Not that we haven't heard it before. But it's the certainty we need in such an uncertain world. The rock solid hope we need in such a fragile life. The joy we need in such a time of sadness. Holy Week and Easter is exactly what we need to bring us through this time of plague - spiritually AND physically. To bring us through with a stronger and clearer faith, and to bring us through with a life that is eternal. That we have 20/20 vision - and not just this year of our Lord 2020, but forever.

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