Come to Your Senses During Lent – Noticing the Presence of God.

Seeing God

Job 42:5; Mark 8:22-26; John 1:5 March 9, 2025

John 8:12; John 9:1-7; John 9:39 Kimby Young

1 Corinthians 13:12

This season of Lent, I decided to explore our five senses as a way to approach God. We use our senses every day to explore and understand the world around us. I wonder how our senses can help us to notice God’s presence and power among us. How can we come to know God with us - through sight, sound, touch, smell and taste? I start today with the sense of sight. Perhaps because - “seeing is believing.” Or Perhaps because the idea of seeing God is all over the Bible. In the Old Testament, to see God, to come face to face with God, was powerful, and even dangerous. To see God would bring transformation. Moses face was glowing after being in the presence of God. Job in our verse from today – found new understanding. In the Gospels, the contrast of light and darkness is a continuing theme. John particularly draws from images of blindness and sight, to make a point about understanding God. He frequently asks, as in today’s scripture – who sees and who does not see? Those who should see God, the leaders of faith, are often blind. The blind man has his physical sight restored, and in the process comes to see God in Jesus Christ. Jesus frequently says, let those who have eyes, see. Or let those who have ears, hear. Being able to perceive something with our senses, does not necessarily mean we understand it. Perceptions vary. Even perceptions of the very same experience lead to different understandings. So how can our perceptions help us to come to know God? How does Jesus help us to see God? How can what we see, help us to believe? How does what we see in the world or even how we see the world, help us to see God?

In the readings from John for today, a blind man is healed. Some people see it as a miracle and evidence of God’s power in Jesus. Other people see it as a trick by Jesus to take power from the true faith of the temple. Their eyes saw the very same thing and yet their perceptions were vastly different. Jesus action of healing the blind men, brought some people to faith in God. Jesus actions brought other people to anger and the desire to kill him. What is different?

It happens today. I see a sunset or a rainbow or even a Spring storm. And I thank God. I think of the power of the Creator and God’s love for the world. Another person sees a scientific phenomenon that points to nature. Another person, doesn’t even see the beauty at all – there but not noticing the details of God’s grace all around us. What makes the difference in our perception?

Because for Jesus, it is about perception – openness and choice. That verse from John 9 says, Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind.” It seems a little harsh at first hearing. But Jesus recognizes human nature. Jesus knows sometimes we don’t understand what we are seeing. Sometimes we don’t see God all around us. That is exactly why Jesus came into the world to try to point us toward God, to help us to see. Before that, God had come to Abraham and Moses and all the prophets. God had come to the chosen people of Israel to reveal God more clearly, with the hope that then they would show God to the entire world. But as is human nature, they didn’t always see and even when they did see they didn’t share. So God came again and again, and finally came in flesh and blood in Jesus Christ to try to show who God really is. And still, we missed it. God shows us every day who God is. And still we don’t always see.

Sometimes it is a matter of focus. We are focusing on the details and we miss the big picture revelation of God. Sometimes it’s the other way around – we are looking at the broad strokes and we miss the details of God’s loving revelation. Maybe it’s not about focus, but about distractions. The world is very loud. Evil is very distracting. Maybe we miss the presence of God because we are looking somewhere else.

The point Jesus was trying to make is that we must pay attention. Pay attention to God. Jesus shows us clearly how we should live, how we should walk in the way of love. Pay attention. Think about what we see and what we do. We make a million choices every day. Jesus says Choose God. Choose Love. Choose Life.

Because those first disciples watching Jesus, walking with Jesus – those people who were right there when the blind man was healed. They had to choose. Do you trust what you are seeing? Do you trust God? Or do you trust what you have been told, what you think you know, what custom or law or religious assumption would tell you? Do you see Jesus? Do you know God?

Today we still choose what we see. And I will admit, today, it is sometimes really hard to see what is true, what is right, what is good. Sometimes it is far too easy to dwell on the negative, to see what is going wrong, to worry about so many problems. Faith does not call us to have a blind eye to evil and injustice. In fact, faith calls us to see clearly and to work for the good of all. It means seeing what is really here – what needs improvement, who needs help. But faith also means seeing all that is good – seeing the beauty, the grace, the miraculous gifts of God. Seeing God’s promise and hope for the future, and living in the light of God’s love.

Sometimes it’s about focus. It’s about choice. It’s about keeping your eyes on Jesus and following wherever God leads. That is your invitation during this week ahead. Open your eyes. Look for God in the world. Look for the love of Jesus in your life. See the gifts of God. Each week of Lent I will invite you to use your senses in the week ahead. This week it is the gift of sight. Look around you. See how you see God this week. And if you are willing, share your sightings, your stories, your insights on the bulletin board in the narthex. Let’s practice now.

What do you see right now? And how do your eyes lead you to know God?

I see the cross in the center – reminding me of the love of Jesus. I see beautiful windows – telling the story of the life of Jesus. I see new decorations reminding me of faithful volunteers. I see your faces – young and old, male and female, happy, sad, curious, kind. In your face, I see the face of God, the love of God, the light of the world. How do you see God today? Open your eyes. Open your hearts. You will see God. You will share grace. Thanks be to God.

March 9, 2025 – Lent 1

Job 42:5

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.

Mark 8:22-26

They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Can you see anything?” And the man looked up and said, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.” Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again, and he looked intently, and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Then he sent him away to his home, saying, “Do not even go into the village.”

John 1:5

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

John 8:12

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

John 9:1-7

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work 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.” When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

John 9:39

Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind.”

1 Corinthians 13:12
For now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.