

Ser20-12 "Wow! I Can See Again" 3-22-20 tucc **Lent 4: Blindness -- Sight Restored** 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Ps 23; Eph 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

I love the writings of C.S. Lewis, a writer of Religious books and some wonderful fiction. C.S. Lewis is from England. He wrote such books as "The Screwtape Letters;" "Mere Christianity;" "Surprised by Joy;" and many of our boys and girls and youth know his series called, "The Chronicles of Narnia." (If we had had a service today with time for the children, I would have talked with them about the Narnia stories.)

William Nicholson was so fascinated with Lewis that he wrote a play about his life. This play is called "Shadowlands" which was in regional theaters in years past. The play was also made into a great movie way back in 1993 and available online:

<https://www.christiancinema.com/digital/movie/shadowlands>. In addition to being about C.S. Lewis' life the play is also about a woman named Joy Davidson. The play is about their life together: how they meet, how they fall in love, get married, and then have to deal with Joy's illness and death.

Joy Davidson, a visitor from the U.S., "had read many of Lewis' books and found them very helpful in her life, especially as a source of healing, a source of light for a troubled and painful life back in the US.

C.S. Lewis has a very comfortable and settled life, living with his brother in Oxford. He might be described as rather set in his ways.

Joy Davidson, as she is visiting England attends a lecture given by C. S. Lewis. The two meet at a discussion session after the lecture. At first, Joy is rather cautious about taking up too much of Lewis' time. But it seems that the author is quite taken with her...quite attracted to her. Joy is quite interesting and also holds her own as a "very capable participant" in these discussions with Lewis and the other professors.

In some ways, it seems that Joy has a hidden agenda as she asks Lewis about the sorrows of his life; about some of the dark times of his life. As he shares some of his story, Joy gains the courage to share a rather vivid account of a time in her life, living in the painful tension between the shadows and the light ---- a powerful turning point from the shadows to the light, a time when living in the tensions deepened her faith.

Here is how Joy tells part of her story: ***We were living in Westchester County. Bill was working in the city. One day he phoned from his office to say he was losing control of his mind and that he wasn't ever coming home. Bang went the phone down. That was it. I had a small baby. I was alone. I had no idea what to do. It was like I was completely overcome by the darkness. I called everyone I knew.***

As you can see Joy's marriage to Bill back in North America was coming apart at the seams, and she was growing more desperate and alone. It was the darkest hours of her life.

They hadn't seen Bill. I put the baby to bed, and I waited. He didn't come home. I didn't know if he was dead or alive. Round about mid-night, I broke down. I never felt so helpless in all my life. The baby was upstairs asleep. I was in the room.

At this point in the play, in the midst of her helplessness, she begins to describe a presence—a light really—that came to reassure her and which forms the basis of a confident faith.

Just for a few seconds, maybe a half minute. But I knew it was a real person. More real than real. So real that everything else was like shadows. I said something. I've no idea what. I guess I was just saying. Okay then. Okay.

Right out of the shadows into the light, Joy Davidson finds a path toward healing...toward a deeper faith. Guided from the shadows by a 'Seeing-Eye God,' she is being led toward a new love, a new relationship, a new future.

Imagine the idea of a 'Seeing-Eye God.' "God beckons us to trust our way into the future, relying on God's sight – even when we do not clearly see its outcomes, even when we see causes for fear all too clearly." Certainly, in these times of fear and isolation (based on the awful reality of the Coronavirus impact on all our lives...lost jobs, illness, death for some, etc.), more and more are living in the shadows.

"I once was blind, but now I see." These words of the blind man in our gospel lesson this morning come from one who had not seen the light ever, for he was born blind. He trusted the gift of light, the gift of a healing touch, the gift of a guiding hand and walked with the seeing-eye Christ into an uncertain future. Uncertain for sure, full of fears, and yet full of hope.

You'd be interested in knowing that C.S. Lewis and Joy Davidson eventually walked hand in hand, guided by a faith given them by a seeing-eye God, into a future of love and relationship. It is reported that on their wedding night, as they returned to Lewis' home, where he had lived with his brother, being rather nervous, said to his new wife, "I don't know how to do this." With great gentleness, she said to him to do whatever he always did to get ready for a night of sleep and rest, just do the things you always do, but this time I will be here waiting for you." Out of the shadows into the light of a new and loving relationship.

"God beckons us to trust our way into the future, relying on God's sight – even when we do not clearly see its outcomes, even when we see causes for fear all too clearly."

The blind man could see again because he trusted Jesus to show him the way.

Just as I shared with you two weeks ago, one of the great spiritual fears of my life is that in the darkness of some small closed claustrophobic space, there will be no presence of God. God just won't be there for me. No one will be there to lead me to safety. But the story of Jesus' healing of the blind man; and with Paul's admonition to "take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness," I am challenged to believe in the seeing-eye God.....the One who only desires light and love and goodness for me.....**and for you.**

Indeed, what does it mean to believe in this seeing-eye God? What does it mean to believe that God beckons us to trust our way into the future, relying on God's sight? As one other has written, "it means that we continually hold our eyes open to the possibility that God will use any means, maybe even us, to do extraordinary acts of love, mercy, healing and justice."

It also means, I think, that unlike the Pharisees in the gospel lesson, when we are led out of the shadows into the light that we celebrate it with excitement rather than with skepticism and doubt. It means believing that God can change the most hopeless circumstance into the opportunity for seeing with God's eyes. It means trusting that the people of this community of faith will always come together to help open each other's eyes...to see in a new way what God has for us in the future.

"Right out of the shadows and darkness of a painful lost relationship, Joy Davidson finds a path toward healing.....toward a deeper faith. Guided from the shadows by a Seeing-Eye God, she was led toward a new love, a new relationship, a new faith, a new future.

In the name of Christ, may it be so in your lives and in mine. Amen.