

Readings

2 Corinthians 5:1-9 (ESV) For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷***for we walk by faith, not by sight.*** ⁸Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

John 9:1-25 (ESV) As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³Jesus answered, ***“It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”*** ⁶Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, ***“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”*** (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” ¹⁰So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ***‘Go to Siloam and wash.’*** So I went and washed and received my sight.” ¹²They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do

such signs?" And there was a division among them. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰ His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹ But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." ²² (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus^[b] to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³ Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵ He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

Sermon

Grace, mercy, and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the One who is the risen Christ. Amen.

My mom once told me a funny story about my uncle when he was 10. My uncle woke up one morning convinced he was going to be blind. So he decided to prepare himself for the eventual descent into darkness. His plan was simple, he would close his eyes and go about his day.

My mom said the whole family got a kick out of watching my uncle, walking into walls, feeling around for his silverware and plate at mealtime, and falling over the coffee table. That is until he knocked over my grandmother's favorite lamp and broke it. After a spanking and one week stent of being grounding in his room, he decided that his diagnosis of the onset of blindness may have been wrong. Today my uncle still has 20/20 vision, but he does need readers. And of course, the rest of the family has not yet allowed him the ability to forget the incident.

The sense of sight is an amazing feat of God's perfect engineering. Our eyes allow us to perceive shapes, distance, movement, color, heat, and depth. Our eyes also help in regulating our sleep patterns known as the circadian

rhythm. But the eye alone cannot create sight. In order to have sight you need the presence of light to help perceive the information, the optic nerve to relay the information, and the brain to interpret the information.

The ability to see is an extremely complicated process and sometimes our eyes can play tricks on us, like seeing things that are not there, for example a mirage. Sometimes we don't see what is right in front of us, like our car keys. And for some people they can't see at all, because they were either born blind or they lose their sight later on in life due to a problem with the eyeball, the nerve and the brain. But there are people who are blind because of their heart. Take the Jewish leaders in the Gospel reading.

Jesus gave sight to a man who was born blind. It's a complete miracle! With our modern-day technology, doctors have the ability to restore sight to some people who have lost their sight later on in life. The problem is that most people who have undergone the procedure wished they were still blind because of the overload of sensory information that is sent to the brain. But Jesus healed a man born blind without any problems or side effects. If a doctor could do that today the world would be extremely amazed.

But the Pharisees were not the least impressed by Jesus' miracle of giving sight. In verse 16 they said, "*This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.*" As Jesus said in verse 3, the reason the man was born blind was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. But the Pharisees could not see Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. Their hearts were hardened. They chose to see making mud out of saliva as a violation of their interpretation of the Third Commandment. They could not see the forest because of the trees, so they focused on the dirt. The man who was born blind has sight, while the Pharisees are totally blind to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and the long-awaited Messiah.

So, what about you? Do you doubt or question if God really cares about you or that your sins are truly forgiven? Could the Atheists be right, that there really is no such thing as God? If you have thought one of these three questions or they have passed quickly through your mind, then you're not alone. We all have doubts from time to time. We are so much like the Apostle Thomas sometimes. We just want to see something tangible, something solid, something to show others. That's why people want to find Noah's Ark, the Ark of the Covenant, and the Holy Grail. These are why people want to believe that the Shroud of Turin is Jesus' burial cloth.

This is not a new phenomenon. In fact, the ability to have something tangible in order to prove to ourselves and others that Christianity is the correct and the only true religion has been going on since Jesus ascended. This is what St. Paul is addressing in His second letter to the Corinthians. Prior to chapter 5:7, where Paul writes, *"for we walk by faith, not by sight,"* he writes, *"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look **not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen**. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."* (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

The Bible states over and over that our focus is not on this sinful, fallen world. We're not to focus on the tangible things of this world, because it is all fading away. When Jesus returns, everything we see will be gone. So the tangible things are not really tangible in the large scheme of things, because it will all disappear. Instead God wants us to focus on what is truly real – Him, heaven, forgiveness and life everlasting.

You can't show people these things because at this time they are not tangible here in this sin filled place, but one day they will be and you will see God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with your own eyes. If we could see Jesus like Thomas and the rest of the disciples, then we really don't need faith. But there is a blessing in walking by faith and not by sight.

Jesus said to Thomas, *"Have you believed because you have seen me? **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**"* (John 20:29) And Peter wrote, *"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."* (1 Peter 1:8-9)

So, let us focus our sight solely on our eternal God; our maker and redeemer, the one who was, who is, and who is to come. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He will be seen by all people, both the living and dead, coming in the clouds. And every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess; Jesus Christ is Lord! Amen.