

The Rev. Emily Dunevant

John 8:31-36  
Jeremiah 31:31-34  
Psalm 46  
Romans 3:19-28

October 27, 2019  
The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

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This week, we reached a milestone in our household. Camden got glasses. It was one of those unanticipated moments. We thought he was seeing just fine. He passed the eye test at the DMV. He passed the eye test at the doctor's office for his yearly checkup. But, the other night he ran over a rather large tree branch that had fallen in the road. He couldn't see it. And, so, off to the optometrist we went.

We found out his eye sight isn't so good after all. He's farsighted with astigmatism. Camden had gotten so used to seeing with blurred vision that he had no reference point to what it meant to see well. Blurred vision was simply the norm. He had a clouded and at times confusing perspective on the world. But that's all there was so there was never any reason to question it. From his perspective, wasn't this just how everyone saw the world?

And then, the glasses were put on. Suddenly, things seemed clearer. Words were in focus. Colors were more vivid. Yet, this is what I found interesting...at the same time that things were coming into focus, his head started to hurt. Putting on glasses certainly cleared things up but it was going to take him some time before he adjusted to this new way of seeing. It was frustrating. He didn't want it...even though it meant seeing better.

It reminded me that it is often easier for all us to stay in a foggy, uniformed way of seeing the world. It's easier at times, when we can't see clearly, because to see clearly may mean that we have to readjust our way of thinking when the veil is lifted.

Seeing clearly can be hard. It may take some work and it may cause some headaches. But as I told Camden, it gets easier. Soon, this new way, this correct way of seeing won't be so hard. The headaches will cease and it will become second nature to see without distortion.

Camden's glasses became the perfect metaphor for this week as I thought about what it means to know the truth...or in other words, to see clearly...to discern right from wrong. Frankly, it seems these days everyone thinks they have "the truth"...or at least their version of the truth. They think they see things as they should be and of course, the way they see things is most certainly the right way, the way the rest of us should see things.

At times, the truth can seem so foggy that you start to wonder...who is right? I know for me it makes me wonder how in the world we will ever be able to find a moral and ethical compass that we can all agree upon. It seems these days everything is up for redefinition. Is there such a thing as the common good or even a common consensus on what it means to be an upright person of character and integrity?

How do you know if you are seeing clearly?

First, Jesus tells us in John that real truth is a gift of grace. It isn't something that comes from human reason or debate. It's given to us but to receive it we have to be willing to reflect upon our sins, our shortcomings, our mistakes. For some of us, that may mean being honest about when we have grasped onto our own version of truth at the expense of others. It may mean acknowledging our mistakes and seeking a change of heart. It definitely means being honest with ourselves about what is expected of us as followers of Jesus Christ.

Second, Paul teaches in Romans that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Of course, sin takes on many forms and only you can search your heart for where you have sinned. One thing is for certain, we have all fallen into the trap of grasping onto our version of the truth...because it makes us feel comfortable and safe. So, we avoid seeing clearly.

Think of it like this...if you can own the truth (whatever that may be for you) you will have the upper hand, a special advantage over those who don't think like you. And so, you hold on to that truth at whatever cost because you don't want to give up the foundation you have built no matter how shaky it may be. If your truth can discredit those you disagree with then you may not have to ever admit that you need to shift your perspectives, you won't have to rebuild your foundation, you won't have to admit your mistakes. That's what it means to say that we often choose to live in the fog instead of doing the hard work to see clearly. It makes us vulnerable, and vulnerability is a difficult place to be.

But, the beauty of the Gospel is that we have been given this incredible gift of grace that will allow us to see through the fog in these times of uncertainty. We simply have to be willing to look.

It's a lesson that seems so simple but we all know it's much more complicated than that...because like Camden, when we put the glasses on, we get a headache. It's tough business to see better.

This morning, I ask you to take a step back. Be careful when you start to feel overly confident in your version of the truth in whatever form it may take for you. Be careful not to judge someone else's truth. Because in the end, you both might need to reevaluate a few things.

Paul encourages us in our difference. He is very clear in Romans...whoever judges themselves superior (in thought, word, or deed) creates the problem. Instead, Paul encourages us to build a community of non-judgement, a community of self-sacrificing love for one another. That means, we have to be ready to see clearly, to address our weaknesses and to accept God's grace for those times we have participated in perpetuating division.

It may be hard at times to agree upon the kind of truth that Jesus talks about. We may still find ourselves debating what is morally right and wrong and we may argue at how to get things done in this confusing world we live in.

That's where our commitment to integrity and humility and indeed, vulnerability, comes in. That's where we have to put on our glasses and see past our blurred vision.

Let me leave you with this...maybe, truth is found when we simply ask...would Jesus bless my words? Would Jesus bless my actions? Would Jesus bless my intentions?

When you do that, you might find that seeing clearly is easier than you expected. Amen.