**“Darkness and Light … Blindness and Seeing”**

Isaiah 42:14-21

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

 Lent 4

Jesus said, “I came into this world, that those who do not see may see.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

“Darkness and Light … Blindness and Seeing.” These **four** are the **glaring contrasts** that Scripture causes us to **remember** this weekend. From the first two lines of the Epistle: “**At one time** you **were darkness**” it says, “but **now** you **are light in the Lord**, so **walk** as **children of light** (for the **fruit of light** is found in all that is good and right and true), and” to get there it adds, “**try to** **discern** what is pleasing to the Lord.” In other words, what we **were** and what we **are now**, and how we’re to **walk** **as what we are** relate to those categories: darkness, light, blindness and seeing. Those extremes in contexts, and how we are to discern them and choose our walk as light, is what God through Scripture speaks of to us this weekend. What we’re given (in that consideration) is the very context of our most recent weeks in the Nashville area and, also, this country and the world. With disaster of **storm** and storm of **pandemic virus**, our **APPROPRIATE WALK IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EXTREMES** is what’s demanded of us / expected … we’re to, first, be skilled at **“discerning”, then deliberate at** **“walking” … all in a way honest and “pleasing to the Lord”**.

**Text**

Since the text does, we should define the terms that articulate these extremes. **Darkness** we might be getting the **hang of** (or, at least, a **hint of**)lately. It (“darkness”) is **death** and also the **process of getting-there**. The process of **getting-there** might (in this time) be beginning to feel real as it might not have before. The process, though, we’ve all been in. Even our youth may be feeling it more, with (beyond the initial excitement of time off of school) a background dread and discomfort that even they’re sensing, they’re having to wrestle with). Parents and grand-parents are a bit more concerned these dayd / serious, and we can’t go everywhere we used to and school (though work) has the social constructs that keep us supported, and we young folks don’t have that for the moment … and aren’t sure when that’ll return to the normal we once knew. Newborns are getting-to the darkness of death. It certainly seems that they’ve got twenty years of growth before officially beginning the dying-off of body cells each day, but the facts of pandemics or tornadoes or an accident or incident of some kind, or any number of child and youth mortality issues can hurry that darkness’s arrival seemingly way before its time. Darkness is always around (but we’re noticing it more lately) to grab whoever it wants of whatever age for the dark reality … and it does-so whenever it wants to do that grabbing.

Yet, there’s something worse. “**Blindness** is a **willfulness beyond darkness** that **includes it** but **settles for it** (and allows it to remain a **forever** **deeper issue** rather than just a **temporary only-momentarily-painful one**). Jesus’ disciples sought answers about a man so-settled-in since birth. Jesus noticed him, changed his course and then warned anyone thinking they see but really don’t, that what there is to see is a **Who** … and it’s **Him**, so “**discern**” **THAT**.

“**Blindness**” **misses Christ in full face of His revelation**. An ancient hymn cries: “**Awake**, O sleeper (the blind), and **arise from the dead** **(the settled-into darkness that’s so much more than just an earthly death)**, and **Christ**” (He Himself, with every ounce of the details to be ‘**discerned’** about what that means in **recognition** and **worship**), **He** “**will shine on you**.”

“**HOW** did Jesus **open your eyes?**” the healed blind man was asked by religious leaders and townspeople alike. “**He** **spoke to me**, **He did!**”, as it says about the situation in verse 37 of John’s 9th chapter. It’s **the “Son of Man” who’s been “speaking to you” and “you have seen Him”**. “**Lord, I believe**”, the man said back, **then** “**worshipped Him**”.

People have been **faced** **with the “Son of Man**” forever. **Physical eyesight through testimony (the Gospel)** has been prevalent since Creation. A “Seed” of woman, a Blessing to the world through a Nation, a land and protection, a covenant and a deliverance through a virgin girl, then a baptism into us and a death upon a cross with our sin upon Him, a resurrection as “darkness” couldn’t hold Him, then every witness to His rising then ascending to (still now) reign over this world that’s worst problem He solved, the “Son of Man” (Jesus) can be seen, **“Light” Himself** “**shining**” in the midst of any darkness (**superseding it**) … **beating it.**

But **vision** means recognizing the **necessity** of **God’s Lamb slain**. It **recognizes** and **worships** God’s Divine Son (through Whom all was created) willfully **blinded under sinfulness** to **be IT** and **crucify IT with His sacred body** because nothing short of **THAT** was what we **needed** to be saved from the “**darkness**” and (more importantly) “**blindness**” that we’d become.

The summary of our vision and worship is graphically articulated by Isaiah’s verses 18-21 of his 42nd chapter. In credal fashion, the call to salvation says: “**look, you blind**, that **you may see**! [And] who is blind but **My Servant**” (the Father says of His Son, Jesus, the Savior, **humiliating Himself by taking on humanity’s / our blindness**). “**Who is blind as My Dedicated One, or blind as the Servant of the Lord? HE sees many things, but does not [choose to, by the humility of the BEING SIN part] observe them. [But] the Lord was pleased, for His righteousness’ sake, to magnify His law and make IT glorious**.”

“**Light**” becomes an easy **One** to define, but maybe taken-so-for-granted that **HE (Jesus)** is just a word and not (by a long shot) enough **THE WORD**. “**Light**” is all that “**darkness**” **is not** in life and it abundant and full and eternal, the truest sense of it is not a light-**bulb** but **capitalized** (as in the proper name of a **person**) in **Jesus** **/ Him IT**. Though all physically die and get sick and struggle and suffer, Jesus says that **Children of His only “fall asleep”, then gain “Paradise” (as He calls it)**. “All things work together for **Good** for those who love God, called according to His purpose”.

And “**seeing**” is **knowing that** and **worshiping that way** **(Him)**, “**discerning**” as Ephesians has us call it, and **trying to “walk as children of Light” as we know what that is**.

**Application**

I can’t fully tell you where the events of our days will **lead us through**, but texts like today certainly remind us where God (in who He’s made believers to be, baptized and worshiping from that) is **leading us** **TO**. “Children of Light” head toward the “Light” in Jesus … we always do overall, repenting constantly and corrected on paths **proper** as we do. Getting there may be **through** challenges and difficulties, but **HOW** **we traverse them** bears witness to **God’s work in us**. As He put it to disciples when answering the **WHY** **question** about the blind man’s suffering and struggles: “it was **that the works of God might be displayed in him**.”

I want to leave us with a prayer that I reminded us all about a couple of weeks ago … to **petition God that His works might be displayed in us in our days**: “Lord God, You **have** called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out **with good courage**, not knowing where we go but only that **Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us**; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

Now may the peace of God **that** passes all human understanding keep our hearts and minds in +Christ Jesus. Amen.