

## “Open the Eyes of My Heart”

Ephesians 1: 15-23

The Season of Easter is drawing to end but that does not mean the story of the resurrection is complete. We are simply transitioning into another chapter of this amazing story which brings transformation, this time turning to a time after Jesus has ascended into heaven, a time when communities of faith are now trying to figure out what it means to be the Body of Christ in the here and now.

It's funny how a text written two thousand years ago still has a relevant and needed message for the Church today. One would assume that certain things lose their value or importance over time due to changes in society and culture but the ironic thing is-the more things change, the more they stay the same. I say this because the early church who first heard this letter was experiencing a very similar cultural context to what we as postmodern believers are experiencing in our world today. Multi-cultural, multi-lingual; multi-belief; multi-religion, multi-racial; multi-ethnic; all rolled up into a human community, trying to live together the best way they knew how.

The world context the early church moved and existed in really isn't that much different from our own world context. Sure, technology may be a bit more advanced and our basic way of being may be a little different but just like the early

church, we as postmodern believers are still asking the same questions, questions like: “How do we make the Gospel relevant today? How do we interpret the Gospel message so that it helps us as people of faith transcend cultures and language barriers? The Church has been asking these questions since the beginning, often coming up with more questions than answers like we are doing as we make our way through this time of uncertainty. So to help us, maybe not find all the answers but at least discern some theological grounding for these questions, we turn to Paul, the great evangelist of the early church.

In the verses before our text, Paul reminds the people at Ephesus that this world does not last word, that we know something that this world does not know....that God is still moving in and among us, bringing forth healing and wholeness for all of God's people, that as people of faith, some of the greatest gifts we can share is the love and friendships found within the community, a community made up of ordinary people from all walks of life, coming together as one. No longer rich or poor, no longer slave or free, no longer male or female. The community is now one Body, one faith, one baptism, one Lord. All of which shows the world that there is a different way to be, a way not based on power or money, but rather a way based on love and grace.

Paul tells the group at Ephesus that their unity is grounded in God’s grace which is the very foundation of our faith, that everything has been brought

together and summed up in Christ. Everything in heaven and everything on the planet earth are all together as one in Christ. No one is left out. Nothing is reduced because someone new enters into the circle of love and grace.

Paul continues his letter by reminding them that there is more than enough to go around, calling on this community of faith to embrace each other as friends in Christ, that together in Christ, we discover who we are called to be as Jesus' followers...a people of love, a people of grace, a people whom God has marked with the promise of the Holy Spirit, called now to take these gifts...these gifts of love, these gifts of friendship and share them with others.

All of this is background for our text today as Paul continues to remind the group at Ephesus, and reminds us again today that as people of faith, we know who we belong to...We are God's very own and that God's love is big enough for all of us. And that once we realize this with both our minds and our hearts, everything changes. The way we see others changes. The way we interact with others changes. The way we live our lives changes.

Or let me say it this way.... I have greatly appreciated the words of support which I have received during this online virtual church experience because as one church member so aptly put it... the novelty has worn off. This church member went on to name that this whole experience has taken some practice. It has also

challenged us to put some thought into making sure that we get our wording just right so that we truly reflect who we are as Midway Christian Church. But the greatest benefit of this online experience is that it has taught us once again, that we are called to step out in faith, not fear.

I cannot tell you how much I needed to hear these words this week because it gets awfully lonely preaching to an empty sanctuary. I have kept these words close to my heart as I have gone through this week and I was graced to see them brought to life through the actions of another church member. On Tuesday night, I witnessed a church member delivering meals in our community. No fanfare. No showy forms of attention. This church member was simply getting out of her car and taking a meal to someone in our community. I texted this church member later and let her know how much this gift of seeing her share God's love with others meant to me, and that it did this weary minister's heart some good.

These words of faith which one church member shared with me and the gift of seeing another church member enact God's love for others in our community reminded me again that even though we may not be physically meeting in our building, we are still living out our call of Welcome as the Body of Christ here on Earth, that God's Spirit is moving in and among us, brining us back to life.

Through these words of faith shared with me by one church member and by seeing another take care of the least of these in our community, I was once again

reminded of the words from our text: "But I do more than thank. I ask—ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for his followers, oh, the utter extravagance of his work in us who trust him—endless energy, boundless strength!"

Again, in these words, Paul reminds us that as people of faith, thankfully the bringing about of healing and wholeness is not up to us. But this does not mean we are excluded from participating in this life giving work. Everything we do is grounded in the power of God, a power which overcame the grave and brought forth new life. We get glimpses of this power each and every day in ordinary and extraordinary ways.

This is what energizes us when the world tells us we are foolish to believe, this is what gives us hope when it all becomes too much, this is what sustains us and brings us together....the power of God, transforming us, and showing us a different way to be...a way of grace, a way of love, a way of mercy.

Paul's words which he shared with community at Ephesus years ago still resonates with us today in 2020...words which ask that our hearts be open, that our minds be open to the word and will of God, and that we can see with the eyes of faith where God is moving in and among us, bringing us back to life. Imagine what

could happen if we simply hold these words in prayer each and every day and invite them to transform us into the people God created and calls us to be. Maybe then we will begin to understand that again being the church was never about the buildings or the programs,. Rather it has always been about getting back to the heart of the matter which is to love one another. Amen.