

# Sermon for Sunday, October 13, 2019 - "Worship As Cataract Surgery"

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
October 13, 2019  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, Iowa  
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[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

This week I read a vivid description of what happens when we worship: In worship we experience something like cataract surgery.<sup>1</sup> As many of you know from personal experience, a cataract makes your vision cloudy as if you are looking through a frosty or fogged-up window. Cataract surgery involves removing the cloudy lens of the eye and replacing it with a new lens. After people have this surgery, their eye seems to sparkle like a window that has just been cleaned. There is a twinkle in their eye. Take a close look at someone who's had this procedure recently- it's fun to see.

Worship is a bit like cataract surgery. It cleans the fog from our vision and changes how we see the world. It helps our eyes to shine with clear-eyed hopefulness.

That's good news because how we see things really matters. The way we perceive God, other people and ourselves really impacts our lives. That's clear in our Gospel reading today.

Ten men with leprosy approach Jesus but keep their distance because they knew they're seen as unclean, impure, disgusting. They know people look at them with judgement and condemnation. They've been taught to hide away out of sight, to keep their distance. Yet Jesus sees these people and wants them to be both healed and restored to community. So, he tells them to go and show themselves to the priests. He wants the priests to look closely at them and declare that they are well.

These ten lepers do as Jesus tells them. Yet as they go, we're told that one man *sees* that he is healed. He notices, recognizes, perceives the amazing thing that God has done for him. Because he can see it, he can't help but turn back to praise and give thanks - a very faithful response.

Ten people have been healed, but apparently only one really perceives clearly what has happened. What he sees makes all the difference in the trajectory of his life and provides him with powerful healing experiences as he praises God, expresses gratitude and gets to hear Jesus' words of blessing spoken over him.

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Dr. David Lose offers this image for worship in the Dear Working Preacher blog dated October 3, 2010, entitled "Cataract Surgery"  
<http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=1518>

Those things all contribute to well-being and wholeness (and by the way, we get to share in them today.) He experiences these things after perceiving what God has done for him. How we see matters.

Jesus then asks his disciples and all of us to take a look at this faithful man - to really see him and learn from him. He is a Samaritan, which means he is not only considered a foreigner to the Jews, but also an enemy. The Jewish people have been conditioned to look down on people like him, to view them with suspicion - the way prominent politicians are encouraging us to perceive immigrants and Muslims. How we see matters.

Jesus wants us to see others differently - to see as he sees. So, throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus calls his disciples' attention to the people they view as enemies and says, look here is a good Samaritan. Here is a faithful Samaritan. This is who you should picture when you think about goodness and faithfulness. As he does this, Jesus asks all of us to look more closely at those we fear and distrust to see their abundant goodness and faithfulness.

From a variety of different angles, this story shows us that the way we see matters. It impacts everything.

Yet, so often our vision is clouded by our fears, insecurities and judgements. We view people as problems to be kept at a distance or as enemies to be feared. We look at ourselves with shame and even disgust, seeking to hide from others and from God. We perceive God as an angry judge and are unable to recognize and give thanks for the healing that God brings into our lives. We get stuck in negative perceptions of ourselves and the world around us. When we see the world in these ways, we don't experience well-being and wholeness.

Jesus wants us to see differently. Jesus wants to cleanse away all that clouds our vision and give us a new way to see. That is what happens each week in worship - it's why worship is a bit like cataract surgery. Through word and song, bread and wine our perceptions of the world are challenged and reoriented. Our vision is cleansed and renewed. We are given a new lens with which to view God, others and ourselves - a lens of compassion and love.

Yet before we're willing to enter this process, we need to know we have a trustworthy surgeon. We need to know that we can trust God to guide our perceptions and our view of the world. This is the most important thing that happens in worship - we learn that God can be trusted.

We learn this because in worship we are drawn into God's loving gaze. We come into God's presence and we experience God's face shining on us with love and delight. We see that God is loving, compassionate and forgiving. This allows us to be clear-eyed and hopeful, even in this troubled world. It allows us to experience well-being and wholeness, even when we face illness, pain and hardship.

The healing service we share in today lets us bask in God's compassionate gaze. In this gaze, you are seen, blessed, healed and sent out to delight in God's world.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer.