Devotional on Psalm 23 and John 9:1-41  
(Lent 4a 2020 – During the Covid-10 pandemic)

Please send me your thoughts, your questions, insights and musings. I can post them anonymously. Also send me what you’re reading and watching in these days, especially if it’s inspiring. Let’s stay connected; it looks like we’re in this for the long haul!

What to do when the world needs to behave counter-intuitively? We’re told that the world project is “to flatten the curve” and that to do that we must act in several counter-intuitive ways.

Instead of resiliently “going about our lives,” which we’re often to encouraged to do in a crisis—think about people defiantly gathering in public after a terror attack—we’re now told to break off all routines and self-isolate.

It’s extremely difficult for most people to do and, indeed, it’s because a bunch of people can’t follow this instruction that the current crisis has continued to develop and will end up taking far longer than it would need to.

But Christians are pretty familiar with “counter-intuitive.” We believe that a failed Rabbi is the Lord; we believe that an instrument of extreme torture is the gateway to Life; we believe that humility and truth, even if it works to our disadvantage is what leads to our, to the world’s flourishing.

That and 10 other counter-intuitive beliefs we’re called on to practice before breakfast every morning. Doing what is best for society, for the greater good isn’t a romantic ideal for Christians, it’s normal living!

Or at least it can, it should be! It is our greatest privilege. We normally gather at the Lord’s Table to remind ourselves of this great call and privilege. Today we do so remotely, but not ineffectively; by the Spirit we are united in mind and heart with God’s counter-intuitive people across this globe and across all beliefs.

In this brief devotional I focus on our amazing gospel text with it’s counter-intuitive message: we who see are often blind to the true light and those who are blind often find themselves able to see with a clarity that “sees” to the heart of eternal life.

Books have been written by the blind that tell of their incredible acuity with regard to the other senses, how they learn to sense objects, hear the different sounds different types of trees make; even being guided by an inner light that grows brighter with joy and dimmer with sadness and melancholy.

These phenomena are commonplace and not simply the purview of the mystical.

At the same time, and although none of us would willingly give it up, we’re aware of how the beautiful gift of physical sight often simply skims the surface of things in a self-indulgent, self-serving way that ignores, neglects or even furthers the abuse of others.

All of this is taking place in our text today. We are urged to take note of these phenomena in Lent with an eye, yes an eye, to coming to deeper awareness of God’s presence in our midst and in our lives.

One application: “the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” As we grow in awareness of God’s presence in our lives we won’t experience the deprivation of hunger or thirst or other needs.

Or so we often understand this poetry; but what about this way of understanding: “the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,” as in, “I won’t crave or desire unnecessarily; I won’t hoard, I won’t selfishly cut-off or deprive others of their supply because, with the Lord as my satiation, I won’t desire what I don’t need!”

Fear will not drive me to stockpile beyond what I need for a reasonable amount of time and by acting in that way I will be acting in concert with the kindness of God our shepherd who leads us into fields of green and beside still waters even when all chaos is breaking around us

“I shall not want”

‘I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.’ Jesus says enigmatically and strangely near the end of our text.

Words that sound, given the word he uses, judgemental! But what if it’s more promising. For one, the purpose of God’s judgements, read God’s decisions, God seeing clearly (pun intended) into the heart of things isn’t to condemn

Jesus hasn’t come to condemn the world as this gospel will say a few chapters hence, but to save it.

Secondly, what if it’s, in concert with the story that’s just unfolded, a promise that though we so often see in cursory, take-it-in-at-a-glance kinds of ways, God is drawing us into greater “blindness” to this way of “seeing” and committed to helping us truly “see” into God’s intentions in such a way that will act in concert with God, helping the vulnerable, and not merely trying to rationalize our status quo.

Counter-intuitive yes, along the lines of “we stay together by staying apart, or by staying apart we will come together.”