

Now I see.

I have a drawing of a famous artist here on the screen. Can you guess who drew this? What you see on the screen is done by Vincent Van Gogh from France in 1889. It is an oil canvas work for his friend. Can you tell what you see from the drawing?

One may say that this drawing is an original piece of artwork or not? Others may say how it is valued, and others detail the artwork, how the detail of the drawing is done, and the contrast of the vase and image of the flower and so on. If you are interested in flowers, you look closely for the flowers, and others look at the curves of the drawing, how it makes balance of the drawing, and so on. Different people see different things when looking at the same object.

How do we look at things? I am not talking about one's ability but how we look at things. How we look at things can make a difference; it can become a real piece of artwork, or it can become an ordinary piece of artwork even though it is done by a well-known artist. It all depends on how we look at things.

In two of the readings of 1 Samuel and John, we're challenged to see things with a perspective of how we look at things.

First, we have a born-blind man who couldn't see from his birth. People believed that this man is blind because of his sinful nature. So he is blind.

As the story is told, when Jesus healed this man's sickness, everyone was amazed at what had happened. Especially when Pharisees and the teachers of the law saw the miracle, they denied that it is not God who healed this man.

Actually, they denied any work of God, especially on the Sabbath day. Even though they see the work of God in Jesus in their present, they denied the healing power of Jesus.

We have different perspectives here. The blind man didn't know Jesus at all. He didn't know what Jesus does for people. When Jesus healed this man, he simply confessed that he was the prophet who did it for him.

We have very different perspectives on one event. One confessed that Jesus is the prophet, and others denied the identity of Jesus as the son of God. How people see things varies, and what they see determines what they believe.

We have another perspective of how we look at things in 1 Samuel. Samuel comes to Jesse, the father of David, to anoint the king of Israel out of his 7 sons. When Samuel looks at the sons and is amazed about their outer appearance and their height. But God rejected those things.

The word of God said to Samuel is that he looks at the heart of his people. God looked at the heart of David, and Samuel anointed him. How we see God is also different, and our perspective is different from his.

God represents himself as one who gives equal opportunity; the one who looks at us without favouritism.

How do we see things? How does God see things?

Our perspectives are shaped, limited, and compromised in many different ways. Our perspectives are changed and vary in how we see things. This gospel shows us ways beyond these obstacles.

To see like God sees is what this message speaks to us here. 1 Samuel challenges us here.

Obviously, the blind man is a homeless person with sickness. His appearance is how we can imagine with our ordinary imagination of a homeless person. Obviously, he smells and hasn't washed for a while.

He likely has a negative perspective on life, because of his sickness. His self-esteem has plummeted, and he lacks the self-will of an average person.

Beyond all of that, Jesus came and healed this man. Through Jesus' healing miracle, he was able to see Jesus. He was able to see things differently. Jesus' healing enables him to see positive things over negative. He enables him to dream and hope for better.

We tend to focus on the negative things of ourselves and other people. We try to see weaknesses in other people. We cling to hurt feelings from within, which leads to weakness; weakness becomes who we are. That stops us from seeing things differently, not only that but stops us from doing things differently. Our negative perspective narrows our future visions.

But Jesus' healing miracle allows us to perceive things differently. It enables us to see God, as the creator of the world. He made humans with mud in the beginning. The healing of the blind man is the reminder of the creation story. His healing power grants sight, provides, and offers hope and life beyond our weaknesses.

What do you see? How do you see? How do you portray God here?

1 Samuel presents God as who never condemns and never judges.

"The Lord does not look at the things that man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16.

David was the youngest and most unlikely political person, but God chose him, and so "from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power." 1 Samuel 16: 13.

We have God who has no favoritism.

When Simon Peter denied Jesus three times. Surely it was his weakest moment in his life. When Jesus came to him, he never judged or condemned him. But he asked, "Who do you say that I am?" When Peter answered him back, Jesus simply said, "Feed my lamb."

From my perspective, there is no chance for him to become a disciple again after he denied Jesus three times. I wouldn't want to give him any more chances. He is finished.

We often judge others by their looks and what they did in the past.

We tend to judge children by their school study marks, as if study is everything. Maybe that is how we were treated by our fathers and mothers. We treat them, children, as if there is no future for them. We believe that marks are the measuring rod for what they can do, and for their future. But they are not.

But for God's perspective, there is another chance for Peter. For God, there is another way. From God, the blind man has potential, a new possibility. David, the youngest son of all 7 sons, has new hope and new possibility. That is grace that saved the blind man. That is grace that saved us.

John Newton talks about amazing grace, in his hymn, that grace saved himself when he traded slaves to the mainland of England from Africa. He confessed how God saved him a wrench like him.

Through his healing moment, his eyes were truly opened, and he was able to see Jesus and Jesus saved him.

We can see his confession from his hymn, Amazing Grace. Once I was lost, but now I see, was blind, but now I see.

"Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come:

'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home."
Together in Song 129, verse 3.

Jesus comes to us and gives us his word.

We have not only come here to listen but also to see.

Through his word, Jesus is offering us an opportunity to see, to see beyond obstacles, limits, and our own weaknesses, and invites us to place our hearts in him.

Through him, we have potential new possibilities that the future holds.

We hope that new things will be brought.

So, what do you see? How do you see things, or do you not see at all?

What we see determines what we believe.

Who do you say that Jesus is?

We, as people who claim to have seen Jesus or have been transformed, accept his word as an invitation to live as people who were blind and now can see.

Amen.

