

PARK HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER
REV. JOHN L. THOMPSON
“THE BLIND SEE”
May 29, 2011
John 14:15-21
10:00 SERVICE

The mind's eye can see things that the physical eye cannot see. The spiritual realm cannot be viewed physically. Jesus tried to prepare his disciples to carry on his ministry and to live without his visible, physical presence. He promised them that they would not be left alone, but would be given the Holy Spirit. He told them they could show their love for him by living as he had taught them to live. Jesus kept his promise to send the Spirit to his disciples. And we are heirs of that same promise two thousand years later.

As Jesus prepared his disciples for his physical absence, he gave them two assurances. First, he promised they would eventually be with him in the eternal realm. *“In my Father's house are many rooms,”* he said. *“If it were not so, would I have told you I go to prepare a place for you?”* Second, he said they would continue to experience his presence in the world. He would be present with them through his Spirit, and not only *“with”* them, but *“in”* them, as well. Jesus said, *“You will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.”* What does this mystical-sounding language really mean?

Jacque Lusseyran, born in Paris in 1924, lost his eyesight at the age of eight. As a young man, during the Nazi occupation of France, he organized a student resistance group, which led to his arrest by the Gestapo. Of the two thousand French prisoners at Buchenwald he was one of only thirty survivors. After the war he was a university professor until his death in an automobile accident in 1971. In a memoir titled *And There Was Light*, Lusseyran wrote of the trauma that came to him at eight, and of a magnificent discovery. He assumed he would never see again, and then he discovered that what he had lost was of practical significance only. He said: **“I discovered inside myself everything which others described as being outside of us: on the exterior. And I verified for myself that they were wrong. They said, ‘But he can no longer see the light,’ or even, ‘If he says that he sees it, he is actually imagining it or remembering it.’”**

Lusseyran knew he was not imaging things but perceiving. **“Inside me,”** he said, **“was everything I had believed was outside, in particular, the sun, light, and all colors. There were even the shapes of objects and the distances between objects. Everything was there, and movement as well.”** Lusseyran explained that when he said **“within us,”** or **“within me,”** he was not referring to a form, such as a shell or husk, with a space inside. Speaking of his own inner world, he said, **“Things are there . . . without space.”** Is that possible, he was asked. He said, **“How could I explain it to you? I hardly know what it is. I know simply that things are there, are present without having to attribute to them a particular position in the world.”**

In another place Lusseyran spoke of the ultimate discovery within himself. **“Having become blind,”** he wrote, **“I had [already] discovered enchanted worlds within myself. I think you’ve felt them as well.”** For a time Lusseyran wondered if he himself had created these inner worlds. Then **“one beautiful day I recognized that it was not something I had fabricated, but that in fact it had all been given to me. And given by someone . . . who, evidently, was very much inside of me, but who in another sense . . . was not me.”** Concerning this someone, he said; **“linear space had no meaning whatsoever.”** He identified that someone as God, **“that fountainhead at the bottom of us: I have called it someone watching deep within, also joy. Perhaps it is exactly the same thing.”**

Finally, in an essay called **“What One Sees Without Eyes,”** Lusseyran wrote: **“Something has astonished me for a long time. It is that blind people never speak about the things they see. At least . . . [not] to those who see with their physical eyes. Rather often, however, when blind people are together, suddenly they tell each other what they perceive.”**

It seems likely that physically blind people do not take as many things for granted as sighted people do. They accept the obvious fact that most people in their worlds have a physical advantage. They can see. Meanwhile, the blind person will quietly develop compensatory skills and sensitivities. These compensatory methods of perception will ultimately give the blind person certain unsuspected and subtle advantages over the sighted person. Sighted people may never realize this, however, because we are accustomed to seeing ourselves as normal and the blind as limited. This might be called **“the presumption of the normal person.”**

What is the greatest flaw in our faith? Is it doubt, or uncertainty? Hardly! Doubt is often at the growing edge of faith. Questions may lead us deeper into the

reality of faith, or help keep our faith fresh and alive. The greatest flaw in our faith is most likely not doubt, but presumption. How comfortable we become in talking about God. How casually we relate to spiritual things. Mark Twain talked about **“the calm confidence of a Christian with four aces.”** We so thoroughly domesticate religion that we lose all sense of the sacred and the holy. Presumption has no place in faith. It leads to calling our darkness **“light,”** and believing our blindness is **“sight.”** And it keeps us from using the inward eye, from taking a look within, where we may find the very one we seek.

Earlier in John’s Gospel, chapter 9, Jesus restores the sight of a beggar who was born blind. No one, however, except the formerly-blind man himself seemed capable of celebrating his new vision. Everyone is so focused on secondary matters that no one seems to be able to **“see”** the miracle that has taken place. The incident ends with an exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees. Jesus says, ***“For judgment I came into the world, that the blind may see, and that those who see may become blind.”*** The conclusion seems clear. Some things can be seen only by those who know that they, in and or themselves, are blind.

The Spirit is indispensable to the life of the Christian and to the Church. Engines need fuel. Computers need power. Without the proper power source engines and computers are useless. We human beings are much the same. At creation we received the breath of God, giving us life. Today we cannot live our lives fully and freely without the power of God’s Spirit within us.

I pray that your faith will allow you to see what your eyes cannot see. I invite you to be open to the experience of the power of God’s Spirit within; for I would love to be your pastor. And I would love for this to be your church.