

My sermon today is about the communities in which we live and worship, and the sight that God gives us when we ask. In our passage from the Book of Job this morning, Job says to God, “...now my eye sees you.” *Job 42:7*

The Stewardship letters for our 2022 pledges have been prepared and are about to go in the mail to all of us. I have already filled out my pledge card and so have a number of our vestry members.

Your stewardship committee, headed up by our treasurer, John Oler, has been working hard to put together the letter which you will receive shortly in the mail. Some of our members will give short testimonials throughout the coming month. You will hear from Pari Forood during the announcement time today.

The theme this year is the community we have built. We receive blessings from God, and we are a blessing to each other. And we are a blessing to many in the wider communities in which we live. We are part of God’s mission. Bartimaeus shows us that even a blind man can have better vision than the disciples. He became a follower of Jesus and gave new vision to the Jesus community.

Our community has needed vision too. What that vision will lead us to is still a little hazy. We still aren’t ready to restart our art shows, and we hope in the Spring perhaps we can get back to our long-delayed Outreach Brunches. We would like to have our Trinity Glen friends return to worship and work with us too...but they are not allowed to leave their campus yet. We have our relationships with friends, and we’ve even been able to renew and continue relationships with our online congregation. And that’s just what happens here in this building.

We are part of a very large community because we are not a congregational church. We have ties to every other Episcopal Church in the Diocese, the Province One states, (New England Episcopal Dioceses) and the whole Episcopal Church. We have the advantage of shared resources and a shared common life in Christ. The Vision of Jesus is that we will find unity both inside and outside these four walls.

People we do not know and who lived 200 or more years before us gave money to be used for missionary purposes in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. Through the Missionary Funds of the ECCT we are the blessed recipients of approximately \$15,000 per year for our Hispanic ministry here at Trinity Church.

Yesterday your Diocesan delegates, Bev Becker and Jim Conzo, along with Danielle Gaherty who is on the Standing Committee of the Diocese, and Pastor Marilyn Anderson and myself, all spent the better part of the day at our Annual Diocesan Convention. It is hard to have an all day convention on line. It's pretty tiring even if we didn't have to get into our cars and drive three hours (roundtrip.)

Why did all of us do that yesterday? Because we love zoom so much? No, I don't think so. We attended the convention because we know that our little community is connected to other communities, large and small, all over Connecticut. And we support things that parishes are doing in Hartford, in New Haven, in Bridgeport, and in Cornwall. We are all connected through the one we follow, Jesus. It is Jesus who formed the community of the disciples, as imperfect as they were, and taught us to look for grace to be found in every faithful band of the followers of Christ.

This was Bishop Ian Douglas's last Diocesan Convention with us as he will be retiring now. In his address to us he reminded us of some of the bold moves we have made in the 11 years he has been our Bishop. He had a clearer vision for what we could be as the Episcopal Church in CT. Our headquarters had been in a mansion on the West side of Hartford for many decades. But what he could see was that it was not a unifying place. There was no parking, no access for people who couldn't walk the flights of stairs and we were spending much too much money to repair and maintain that beautiful but unhelpful building.

We now rent space in a brick building in Meriden. It's much more centrally located in our state and accessible to all. We went through a rebranding process too so that our logo, instead of a shield of protection is now an open and inviting cross shaped insignia which reminds us of the Scottish Church's St. Andrew's cross. Our first bishop, Samuel Seabury was ordained there. Bishop Ian had the vision to see more clearly that God's mission is to restore health and unity to all people.

We are not the church of "what have you done for me lately." We are the church of "how can I be a blessing to someone who needs me today?" And so when we hear the story of Blind Bart in the Gospel of Mark, it helps us remember what disciples are like and what disciples with vision do. They see clearly to invite all people into the circle and be healed.

Isn't it interesting that this blind man knows more about who Jesus is than do the people who have been following Jesus all along. Bartimaeus **sees** that Jesus is the Son of David. He **sees** that Jesus has the power to have mercy and to heal us from the things that hold us back.

Don't we also want to see more clearly, love more dearly and follow Jesus more nearly, day by day? You may recognize these words from the song Day by Day from Godspell.

Jesus stood still and said “Call him here.” Blind Bart sprung up and came to Jesus. And Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” Do you remember last week? Jesus asked the disciples James and John that very same question. Their answer was a request was to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus in eternal life. Bart’s request was, “Let me see again.”

Clear vision requires both the ability to see facts and figures that make up a church budget so that we can pay our bills and have a warm and safe church building in which to gather as a community. AND clear vision requires us to look beyond the tangible things on the pages of our annual budgets and see the people who are in our hearts in this community, in the state and in the world.

You can’t put Jesus’ vision in the form of credits and debits on a page. And yet, our budget reflects our priorities – trying to see clearly what Jesus wants us to be about. The connections we make with one another and those we meet on our daily rounds are vision we have in our hearts. It may be intangible but it is also absolutely essential.

We as a parish love art and music. We love our neighbors who are close by, and we love our neighbors and parishioners who are far away. Our budget supports these priorities. And we ask God to grant us a request. May we all have whatever blindness that effects us be removed and so we can see and love those who need us.

**“Day by day / Day by day / Oh Dear Lord / Three things I pray / To see thee more clearly / Love thee more dearly / Follow thee more nearly ./Day by day.”** - Godspell