

## Lent 4A - 2023

### Christlike Sight

Anybody here have selective hearing or seeing? Sure, we all do. Every second, our brain is bombarded with sensory data from all five senses. You just sat down, but already your brain has probably stopped consciously focusing on the feel of the seat. You're probably not thinking about the temperature of the room, although you probably did at one point this morning. There are all kinds of sounds that you're not focusing on right now - the faint hum of lights, somebody shifting beside you. Our brains would go crazy if they had to process every piece of data that our bodies sensed.

We think we're seeing everything, but we're all being selective all the time. Today, you've probably noticed who's not here, who's sitting in a different spot, who's sitting with whom. You may have wondered what it means that so-and-so is sitting with that person.

Years ago, before I dated my wife, I brought a date to a function that my wife also attended. She could tell you exactly what my date was wearing. I don't have a clue. I never did, not even that night. It's the same with cars. You get interested in a car, and all of a sudden you notice them everywhere. They were there before, but you never noticed them.

The part of the brain that filters all this information is called the Reticular Activating System. It's continually at work, even though we never think about it. Today's story is about our spiritual Reticular Activating System. The goal for all of us, if we're followers of **Jesus Christ, is to see the same things that he sees.** We want to notice what's important to him. (by Darryl Dash from *Spiritual Eyesight*)

### *Les Miserables*

Javert is a police inspector and former prison guard who has been on the lookout for decades for the hero, Jean Valjean, a guy initially imprisoned for stealing a loaf of bread. Valjean has committed a minor parole infraction, but Javert can't let this go. In his legalistic brain all crimes have to be punished and all criminals are rotten down to their Fruit of the Looms. At the end of the story Valjean saves Javert's life and forgives him for decades of persecution. This is a crisis for Javert, because he can't **accept that a criminal could do a merciful and grace-filled act**. The contradiction is too much for his world view. Rather than surrender his life-long beliefs, Javert throws himself into the river Seine and drowns.

So, how's this like our Pharisees? These guys have such a rigid world view that nothing can shake them. Jesus can't be holy because a truly holy person would observe the Law of Moses and *never* do any kind of work on the Sabbath. Period. End of sentence. End of book. Forget compassion. Forget mercy. The law is the law, and they are its smug and self-righteous guardians. They are absolute.

In my life time, I have experienced a lot of blindness. All the prejudices: Gender, Skin color, religion, place where you were born, sexual orientation, now the big one transgender.

### **Another Perspective**

There is a story of a beggar who was sitting across the street from an artist's studio. The artist saw him and thought he would make an interesting portrait study so from a distance he painted the defeated man whose shoulders drooped, and whose eyes were downcast and sad. When he was finished, he took the portrait over to the beggar so he could look at it.

"Who is that?" the beggar questioned. The painting bore a slight resemblance to himself, but in the painting before him he saw a person of dignity, with squared shoulders and bright uplifted eyes, almost handsome! He asked the artist, "Is that me? I don't look like that." But the artist replied, "but that is the person I see in you." (by Brett Blair from [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com). Adapted from *New Vision in Christ* by Rev. Michael J. Fish)