

*The rich man and Lazarus. What a great story this is and how pertinent it continues to be. The rich guy, sometimes called Dives, doesn't pay any attention to the poor man begging at his gate until it's too late. We don't need to take Jesus' picture of Hades too literally. Since this is a story we know that both Dives and Lazarus are fictional, and we can also take Jesus' picture of Hades as a fictional setting not a factual description.

Now Dives had probably been ignoring Lazarus for so long that he didn't even see him. *He had been walking past that hungry sick beggar for such a long time that he had a total blind spot about him. And so have his five brothers. They make no connection between Lazarus and what they learn from the Scriptures about justice and care for the poor and the sick and the immigrant.

*And, of course, Jesus' point is that those who turned a blind eye to the scriptural call for justice, compassion and mercy were not going to notice it even after his resurrection.

Without a spiritual orientation, there is no motivation for those who are rich to notice those who are poor. We just think it's the way things are and that I deserve to have more. I think we can see this in a verse of one of my favorite hymns. It's a hymn we sing during creation tide. "All things bright and beautiful." The words were written by Cecil Alexander in the mid 19th century. She included verse 3:

*The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them, high or lowly,
And ordered their estate.

Some people think she was supporting Anglo-Irish landowners at the time of the Irish potato famine, others that she actually meant both rich and poor are equally sustained by God.

I don't know which is right, but I do know that it is easy for rich people to justify their being rich and not question it. *It is also easy to think that immigration policy is not really a problem, only for criminals.

I was chatting with a friend this week and asked whether someone she was thinking of employing could get a work permit. She assured me it wouldn't be a problem because there's a shortage of skilled people in that industry. She hadn't heard about the \$100,000 charge for H-1B visas, or if she had she simply hadn't realized it might apply. She had a blind spot when it came to immigration restrictions, I think because she assumed that only 'bad' people would be stopped at the borders or deported.

Like Dives and his brothers, we all have blind spots – places where we don't notice that we or our society are not living our gospel values.

*The problem with blind spots of course is that we can't see them.

It's true that we can often see other people's. But in another text, Jesus reminds us to *take the plank out of our own eye so we can see clearly before we get to take a speck out of our sibling's eye. We have to face up to our own blind spots not other people's.

So, I've mentioned two places where we might have blind spots and not realize that Jesus calls us to live differently – income disparity, and immigration policy. *What other areas can you think of? Just call them out...

Thank you.

*I picked two areas which I think are often blind spots – places where our thoughts and behavior don't match gospel values - hatred, and creation care.

I expect we all heard something this week about *Charlie Kirk's funeral, and his wife's statement of forgiveness contrasted with our president's statement of hatred. There was an excellent and insightful article by David Brooks in the New York Times about the odd combination of these two approaches within the same religio-political movement. I have left some copies on the ushers table for those of you who are interested.

*We are living in a culture which is saturated with anger and hatred towards opponents. The very opposite of what Jesus taught. And it is very hard for me to listen to it and to oppose the constant throb of retribution without also falling into the trap of hating. So a blind spot for me is that the language and behavior of those I oppose can easily become my own without me noticing.

Jesus taught and showed us that it is in peace and integrity that true power lies. *That is perhaps the main lesson of the cross. Jesus' crucifixion was the ultimate defeat, yet God turned it around and brought resurrection, a triumph of love over death. The triumph of Christ does not come through a sniper's bullet, nor through shouting at the television, but through love for all beings, including those we consider evil.

This is the brilliance of the Civil Rights Movement. They understood that people are never the enemy – racism, sexism, ignorance and mental illness are the enemies. *Diane Nash who was a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee said, “if you recognize that people are not the enemy you can love and respect the person at the same time you attack the attitude or action of that person.”

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*Our baptismal vow is that we will seek and serve Christ in all persons. All persons.

So just in case, just in case, hatred of our opponents is a blind spot, let us practice sending love and compassion to those we oppose, surrounding them and filling their offices with the limitless love of God and the light of the Christ.

And so I come to creation care. *On Friday I ate two meals in fast food restaurants. Because it was convenient and I had little time. I used paper napkins, paper wrappers, paper bags, a plastic cup and yes I admit it, a plastic straw. I know better. But sometimes I get creation care fatigue.

There are many things that I know make a difference and from time to time I have a ‘come to Jesus’ moment when I review *all the packaging and all the waste that ends up in the bin. I vow to do better and for a while I remember my reusable vegetable bags and I take my carefully prepared organic lunch with me.

But I often don’t read the articles about climate change. *I often turn my face away from the disaster happening around us and the suffering of people and creatures created by increasing heat and increasingly intense flooding. I don’t want to know about the people killed by floods in Texas or India, I don’t want to know about the orangutans whose habitat is being destroyed. *And so I turn away and I create my own blind spot.

There are many reasons for celebrating the Season of Creation every September, and one of them is just this. *It helps us to wipe off our mirrors and our glasses, and look at the world with the eyes of God’s

¹ <https://law.nd.edu/news-events/news/civil-rights-pioneer-says-love-fueled-the-movement/>

love. And then we see it clearly, great beauty and great suffering. And we remember, that plastic straw will likely still be around in 200 years' time. What we do today matters.

How we spend our money matters. *Will we use it to buy goods which are made in fair and just conditions or will we turn a blind eye to the way cheap things are made cheaply using human resources and the earth's resources with little care and thought to the flourishing of all beings? Will we use our money to support those who are working for the well-being of all creation in a myriad ways, or spend it on another gadget or in my case, on another book I may never read.

People of God, I do not know where my own blind spots are and I cannot tell you where yours are. *The rich man, Dives, and his brothers could not see what they could not see – the suffering of the man at the end of the driveway – and even more they could not see that Lazarus was beloved of God.

But we have the advantage that someone did come back from the dead. Jesus rose again, triumphed over evil and showed us how to live. And gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit. *The Holy Spirit will show us our blind spots if we but ask. If we ask, the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth and show us where we are failing to love and to live as Jesus did.

But do we dare ask?