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SCRIPTURE. 8th Sunday, Year C 2019

Luke's Gospel today is the conclusion to the Sermon we've been following.
Jesus continues to use images and parables
to encourage honest dealings with one another.
We need help to see clearly,
rather than to just blame one another for faults that we share.

HOMILY. Luke 6:19-45
"Training the Blind"

So what is this about blindness: What point is Jesus making?
Is he looking at blind people in Galilee trying to lead each other around?
Or is he looking at us? Sometimes we don't know we are blind;
and discipleship involves having our eyes opened.

Last Tuesday's report from the Mexican border,
the immigrants and asylum seekers: this was eye-opening.
How aching families arrive and are treated as criminals,
taking away belts and shoelaces as if for their protection,
even giving up their jackets, which might contain drugs.
This makes them less than human, as if they have no story to tell except
that they are a danger to us. A danger to themselves,
when really danger is what they desire to escape.

Eye-opening moments. You have your own I'm sure:
at work, in the family or neighborhood, coming to see more clearly.
I've been learning from our racism team
some of the local history of black neighborhoods being unsettled,
shops and homes in Over the Rhine, people being moved out
for the sake of restaurants, new market-value apartments,
elegant vintage facades repainted, mostly for a white community.
It's easier to be blind to this. I feel embarrassed even as I enjoy all of it.
This is hard to look at, hard to take in the human cost.

I'm glad to be here where we try to help each other come to see a difficult world.
I think this is part of what Jesus calls the full training of the disciples,
not to make us angry or discouraged, but to make us alive and willing to see.

And this is not to be judgmental and blaming of others,
but to know our own responsibilities as part of the whole social fabric.
The good person, the trained disciple, Jesus tells us
out of the goodness of her heart produces good.
Or maybe comes to some change in priorities,
new habits of listening and meeting people
and wondering how we can shape something better.

Lent begins this week. Crowds for Ash Wednesday: maybe you'll be among them.
Fellow Christians marked with ashes. You might see them in Krogers even,
on your street, walking the dog.

How do we belong together as disciples of Jesus
in this suffering world, 2019. Marked as disciples.
Some days it's easier to be a little blind,
or eager to blame others, to remove the speck from someone else's eye
congress, or 3CDC, not noticing the even bigger hindrances in my own eye.

Often I feel called into some better connection to God's mercy and power to love.
A better connection to people. In the midst of this world's sorrow.

Jesus declares today how he wants disciples of clear vision,
wants to train us fully, to be like our teacher.
To call us to fruitfulness. Generous hearts.
A tree capable of fruitfulness.
These are good Lenten desires.

And how does a tree become what it is? By drinking deep of the source,
the waters that have penetrated through the winter. The tree reaches down.
There in our powerlessness, we come to trust the deeper power of God.
No tree can grow itself by its own effort.
It needs to allow life to come, it needs to wait
and trust itself to the sun. It is slow growth.

Marilyn Nelson, an African American poet, wrote these lines:
"this is what fruitfulness is:
to be quiet enough to feel held,
to feel the embrace of the divine,

to realize that I am a part of something vaster than vast;
and to feel that, to recognize that, to feel thankful for it,
and to hope that by opening myself to that awareness,
that I am allowing some of that gift to come (for everyone) through me.”

Read that again.