

Seeing Jesus Today  
Luke 11:9-10

The persona of the church today is that it has become a location where Christians come to reconnect with God, but God stays in the church building. The difference between this image and the Jewish understanding of God living in the Holy of Holies is God used the Holy of Holies as a focal point for the Israelites to follow as they traveled in the wilderness; whereas, Christians, today, have chosen to keep God in the church where we come to worship. The problem is that this portrays Christians as expecting to see Jesus only in the church and not active in the world. The warning here is that there is great power in expectation, meaning that we only find what we are expecting to see. If we expect to see God in the church and nowhere else, that's the only place we will find God. What we need to remember is that God is, also, in what we don't expect to see. Let me explain.

In the scripture for today, we read that if we ask it shall be given, if we seek we shall find, etc. I believe the key to this passage is in what I am expecting to see as I search for Jesus. There is a book Duck! Rabbit! by Amy Krouse Rosenthal. The image in the book is actually found on the cover of your bulletin. I invite you to take a look at image and ask yourself, "Do I see a duck or a rabbit?" Both answers are correct because the brain

is trained to see whatever you decide to see. The same is true for Christ. We can see Christ in the places we choose to search for Christ. Michael Slaughter refer to this as the “power of expectations.” If you only look for Christ in the church that is the only place you will find Christ. In the world today, we search for Christ in the biblical stories when Christ is actually alive in us. Rev. Slaughter writes, “when Jesus left he didn’t say he would leave us with a book, but with his presence in the form of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> I believe this means that instead of just looking at the stories of where Jesus went, we need to be looking for the Holy Spirit active and alive today.

This is also true for what we see when we look at the cross. When you look at the cross what does your eyes see? Does it see a Jesus that has risen to heaven or a Holy Spirit that walks with you in life? The cross is a remind of what Christ sacrificed for us; his death and new life with God. It is also an empty cross reminding us of the promise of God’s covenant that has given us the Holy Spirit to be our life’s guide. Our eyes have been trained to see a resurrected Jesus who lives in heaven; but there is more in this empty cross. Can you see it? The struggle, for Christians, is to look beyond the cross to search for Christ in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Slaughter, Mike (2014-12-16). Renegade Gospel - Large Print Edition: The Rebel Jesus (Kindle Locations 893-894). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

The way to see the activeness of the Holy Spirit is to step back into the scriptures and see Jesus as a rebel *in addition to* the loving shepherd who comes to find the lost. Christians, today, have a tendency to look for Jesus to come down from heaven and make our lives perfect in the eyes of American society. It's God's task to make me successful, to keep me healthy, and to provide for my family. However, if you expect God to do the work, then where do you expect to see Christ. In Matthew 25, Jesus says we are to look for Him when we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison, etc. Human response is, "When did we **see** you naked, hungry, or in prison?" Jesus replied, "When you done it to the least of these, you have done it unto me." We "see" Jesus when we go looking for Jesus with eyes expecting to see him in the world.

Michael Slaughter put it well when he said, "We all think we want to see God, but the Divine often shows up in places we least expect. We will see Jesus when, with an expectant heart, we take a walk on the sacrificial side and discover him in the everyday occurrences of life."<sup>2</sup> We see Jesus where we want to see Jesus but are we looking in the right places and with the right glasses? What often stifles our ability to see Jesus are the glasses we wear to search for Christ. When we look through preconceived

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<sup>2</sup> Slaughter, Mike (2014-12-16). *Renegade Gospel - Large Print Edition: The Rebel Jesus* (Kindle Locations 980-981). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

understanding of what the secular world has taught us about Christ, then we limit Jesus to how society knows Jesus. However, the more we get to know Jesus and his revolutionary view of ministry, we see Jesus different than the world.

The Jewish community only knew to look for God in the Temple which blocked God from their view by walls. The Religious Leaders focused on the building and couldn't see God right in front of them until he died on the cross and rose again. I believe what pulls the church to put on new glasses is our faith as we look for God in the world and not just the church. I am a firm believer that the church is the place where we gather to reconnect ourselves with the Holy Spirit of God through worship, biblical study, and creating ministries in the world where Christ lives. The true place where we experience Christ and see Christ is when we carry out those ministries with people in our community. The church is like Jesus gathering his Disciples to teach them but the world is the place the Disciples were sent to help others see Christ face to face.

This Lenten season has taken on a new light as we prepare to shift gears with your Pastoral leader. I believe this is our personal experience of the Holy Spirit at work. As we announced last week, I will be moving to serve another congregation. For me, it feels like Jesus preparing his

Disciples to take lead once he has died and been resurrected. There is a big life transition in the works where we need Christ to lead us. Christ is leading you to open your minds to the possibilities of what ministry can look like in Denison, Iowa. Remember, there is power in expectation. You will see what you expect to see. Christ will be where you expect to see Christ helping, guiding, and directing this transition.

My prayer for you, is that you will see Christ in yourselves as you talk and live into the new ministry opportunities that come with the excitement of a new leader. Remember, you can see a duck with all the positives, or a rabbit with all the concerns; but remember, Christ is walking with you. Don't forget to look for Christ, lean on Christ, and follow Christ into the world. I see great things that can happen in Denison when you let Christ lead you. In order to follow Christ, you first need to find the Holy Spirit within you. When you open your heart to trust God in you, others will naturally want to follow and find Christ in themselves. I agree with Rev. Slaughter, there is great power in expectation. We see what we expect to see and are blind to other options. Christ offers us, through the Holy Spirit, the expectation of seeing the world and self different. Will you see that new world or only see the world you currently know? In other words, will you see a duck or a rabbit? Amen.