



FIRST (SCOTS) SERMONS

“HOW IS YOUR VISION”

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 43:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

*This sermon was preached by Rev. Tracey Daniel on Sunday, July 11, 2021
at First (Scots) Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina.*

Corinthians 5:16-21

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

In the 2001 movie “Shallow Hal” we meet a young man obsessed with the superficial beauty of the people he encounters. Hal is searching for the perfect woman and is continually disappointed because he can neither find a woman beautiful enough to meet his standards, or if he thinks he has found a perfect woman, she is not interested in dating him. As fate would have it, one day Hal finds himself trapped in a broken elevator with Tony Robbins, best-selling author, life coach and motivational speaker. Hal pours out his story of what has been going wrong in his life, and Tony offers to help him. Miraculously, when the elevator opens, Hal is a changed man. His vision is changed. He now sees beautiful women all around him and even more exciting, they are actually attracted to him. He is quite happy and all is going well, until a friend whose vision is tainted, just as Hal’s was, messes everything up.

When I read today’s New Testament lesson, I thought about this movie. It made me wonder about my vision? Is my perspective shallow like Hal’s was at the beginning of the movie, or am I looking at the world with a vision more aligned with God’s vision? I believe the honest answer is probably somewhere in between the two. So, how about you? How is your vision?

In this story from Second Corinthians, Paul is encouraging the Church in Corinth to see the world through Christ’s eyes. Moreover, Paul is challenging them to live their lives in new ways. He is reminding them that now that they are in Christ, they have been transformed. The old has passed away. He has heard some stories about the church that is making him concerned that they have forgotten what he taught them when he was with them. In his letter to them Paul is trying to re-establish his connection and witness to them. The Corinthian Church is near and dear to Paul’s heart. He planted this church. There was no church in Corinth until Paul started this one. You probably remember the dramatic conversion that Paul had in his life. In Acts chapter 9, we read

that when Paul was traveling down the road to Damascus, he was blinded by a light and he heard the voice of God calling him to be his disciple. After Paul was converted to Christianity – he was on fire for Christ! His goal was to spread the good news of the gospel around the world! Paul recognized that establishing a church in Corinth would be a strategic place for sharing the gospel far and wide. Corinth was a special city because it was a port city. People from all over came and went through Corinth. In some ways, this reminds me of Charleston. People come to Charleston from all over the world to visit, vacation and retire. So, we here at First Scots have a special opportunity to influence how Christianity grows not only here in our city but in places all over the world through the visitors that come to our city and return home. What can we do to make the most of this opportunity? Paul wants his dear friends in Corinth to ask themselves this same question. He doesn't want them to miss an opportunity to share the good news that they have received. Through his letter, Paul hopes to encourage them to not only go to church -but more importantly to be the Church. Paul reminds them how Christ has influenced him and changed his life. Paul was once committed to killing Christians, but ever since he had his conversion experience on the Damascus Road, he never saw the world the same again. In his appeal to the Corinthians, he says that when we are in Christ- we are new creations. With clear eyes - we can see where God is working and moving in the world around us. Paul's life demonstrated a faithfulness that is to be admired. He followed his calling wherever it led him. It was not an easy life. He was called to places of danger and persecution. Paul's commitment was deep and life changing and he did not waiver from his conviction.

God calls all believers, you and me included, to be agents of reconciliation in the world. It is not always easy work. In his role as the founder of the Corinthian Church, he wanted the members to remember what they claimed to believe. We remember who we claim to be each week when we worship together. We confess our sins together. We are reminded that God forgives us, again and again and we can start a fresh, again and again. We also make our Confession of Faith each week as we respond to the word proclaimed. We say what it is we believe. In our worship, we praise God and we remember who we are and whose we are. But the real work of being the church happens when we leave the building. Worship is essential because it helps us remember what we are called to see in the world and how we are called to act in the world. It is easy to forget and loose our conviction. So, it is important to come together with other believers and be encouraged.

There are many obstacles along our journey that can distort our vision: Do any of these obstacles sound familiar to you? Fear, Anger, Disappointment, A warped sense of reality, Sadness, Addiction? What blocks your view? The good news is that, whatever gets in our way of seeing the world God's way, can be removed with God's help. We are called to look at the world through God's eyes, and respond as faithful ambassadors of Christ. How we see the world impacts our behavior and our attitudes. It sounds cliché, I know, but we really are the hands and feet of Christ in the world. When we look at the world through God's eyes we see worth and value in all people. We will also see places of brokenness, poverty, violence, injustice, abuse. And these are places we are called to respond. Faithful followers of Christ are not called to live just for their own pleasure. That was never the life Jesus showed us. Jesus taught us that God loves us and because of that great love we have been given, we are to respond in gratitude by sharing that love with our neighbors. We do this is by using the gifts we have been given by God, whatever that gift may be. I know for a fact you all have gifts! I have seen them and they are impressive! How will

you share your gifts to let others know that God loves them? Many of you are already doing this? Thanks be to God.

Later today we will be commissioning some young people and adults. Part of their commissioning is about making the most of the time that they have been given to grow in faith and share what they learn. As they make those promises and we make promises to pray for them, I want to encourage each one of you to think about how you will use your God given gifts this week. What will you do as Christ's faithful disciple? Are there some specific ideas that come to mind? And as we continue to grow as Christ's disciples whether we are new to our faith or have been practicing our faith a long time, how will we be renewed in our thinking and in our living so that that we can be faithful ambassadors for Christ in the next 6 months, the next year? What opportunities will you make to be Christ's light in a dark world?

- Will you serve as part of a local mission opportunity?
- Will you teach Sunday School or help with Kirk Club?
- Are you feeling called to share your voice as part of our choir?
- Are you are feeling called to take our Stephen Ministry training class in January?
- Is there something in your community that would benefit from your involvement?

And what about in your family, is there a situation where you need to show up differently? I hope today, that you will ponder these questions and think about where your vision could use some tweaking. Look through the eyes of Christ and gain some new insight about your call to discipleship in the world.

By the end of the movie, Hal's friend has broken the spell cast by Tony Robbins in the elevator. And yet, Hal's vision remains corrected. He sees the inner goodness in the people he meets, as what makes a person truly beautiful. May our vision be so clear. Amen.

May God's vision be our vision, so that we see what God sees. May God give us courage to go out into the world sharing the good news of the Gospel, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The following sermon has not been edited by the author; therefore, there may be discrepancies. When in doubt please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website.