

## Paul: God's Will And My Worldview

*"And for three days [Saul] was without sight,  
and neither ate nor drank." Acts 9:9*

### Opening Hymn As We Are Gathered

As we are gathered, Jesus is here;  
One with each other, Jesus is here.  
Joined by the Spirit, washed in the blood,  
Part of the body, the church of God.  
As we are gathered Jesus is here,  
One with each other, Jesus is here.



### Welcome and Announcements

- Lenten Services at 7 at Kirkebo next week.
- Palm Sunday/Confirmation March 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Donations for Palms/Lillies (envelopes on the tables)
- Please continue to support the congregations financially – hard with not being together for so long to keep on top of everything so offering can be brought in person, done on-line or mailed into the office.
- Reach out to Pastor or the church office if you need anything
- Food Shelf open Thursdays from 5-7 at Kirkebo in Perley

### Invocation

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C Amen.**

### Confession and Absolution

P Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law,

**C so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.**

P Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law;

**C rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.** (Romans 3:19-20)

P At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

**C Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,**

**because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.**

P For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.

**C Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!** (Romans 5:6, 8:1-3)

P What, then, shall we say in response to these things?

**C If God is for us, who can be against us?**

P It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns?

**C No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.**

P Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

**C No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** (Romans 8:31, 33-37)

### **Prayer of the Day**

**Lord Jesus Christ, do not leave me to my own understanding. Let me now enter into that holy darkness with Saul, where my assumptions about what makes me right or good or religious can come under your scrutiny. Show me where my vision is at odds with yours. Cause the scales to fall from my eyes, that I may emerge from the dark strengthened in my witness and utterly dependent on your grace. Conform my mind and will to yours. Amen.**

### **Children's Message - a pair of glasses**

Hello, boys and girls. Today I am going to talk to you about something called a worldview. That is a fancy way of saying "the way you look at the world." (*Hold up the pair of glasses.*) What are these? (*Allow the children to respond.*) That's right! They are glasses. What do glasses help you do? (*Allow the children to respond.*) That's right! They help people to see better. When things look blurry or out of focus, we put on glasses to see things more clearly and in sharper focus.

Spiritually speaking, when we put on our "Jesus glasses," we see the world through his eyes. We can see things a lot more clearly from God's perspective and things are in much better focus when it comes to our priorities in life.

There was a man named Saul who went through a big change in his worldview. Before Jesus brought him to faith, he looked at the world and saw people he thought should be mistreated and even hurt because of their faith in Jesus. But then Jesus met him in a vision, and Saul was blind for a time, and then when he could see again, he saw life through “Jesus glasses.” He could see that he needed to join those who were following Jesus and he needed to spread the word to all the world that Jesus came to save all nations from sin and death forever through his death and resurrection.

Let me tell you how this works for us today. Many people look at people who are poor and hungry and thirsty and see only sadness and walk away. But with “Jesus glasses” on, we can see people who need our help and we find ways to reach out to them with joy to give them food and drink, clothing and shelter and the things they need.

The same thing happens when we see people who are mean or who don't believe in Jesus. When we don't see the world through Jesus' eyes, we see people we think are bad and don't like. But with our “Jesus glasses” on, we see these same people as people we want to love and care for and befriends too so they too can see how wonderful Jesus is. Remember next time when you see someone like these kinds of people that we should always try putting our “Jesus glasses” and see what happens.

Let us pray: Thank you, Jesus, for helping us to see the world through your eyes so that we can love and serve and spread the Gospel to more and more people all over the world in your saving name. Amen.

### **First Reading**, Acts 7:54-58; 8:1-3

Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he [Stephen], full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

### **Second Reading**, Acts 9 (selected verses),

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Da-

mascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying." "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to

## Message

On the road to Damascus, Paul had his worldview turned upside down when God called him to preach the name of the Christ he had been persecuting. We follow God's will by putting the crucified Christ at the center of our worldview. Tonight we hear about God's will and our worldview through the eyes of Paul.

You see, I took Ha Shem, King of the Universe, blest be he, very seriously. I took the study of his Torah very seriously. So, naturally, I took violations of his Holy Law and blasphemy very seriously. Unfortunately, I also took myself ... very seriously. And with him that doesn't usually play too well.

There are many Scriptures that I thought were written in support of me. The Holy Prophet Isaiah wrote:

"In Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who walk in darkness will see a great light."

Now when it says "the people" it does not mean the Gentiles themselves. It means the people of the Holy One who live among the Gentiles in Galilee. And when it says "who live in darkness" it does not mean that there are so many clouds that the sun does not shine; it means rather that they are in the spiritual darkness of having departed from his holiness. And when it says "have seen a great light," what is that light but the heat and fire of his judgment upon them? As it says later in the same chapter that they are: "destined for burning" and they "will be fuel for the fire."

By the grace of the Holy Lord, who is a forever blest, I was called to be that judgment—to bring that light and fire—to those of Galilee who blasphemed, who thought

their crucified criminal leader equal to the One.

But the Holy Prophet Amos wrote of the coming judgment:

“Woe to you who long for the Day of the Lord ... for that day will be darkness, not light.” Or both, brother Amos. Or both.

For when I read the words of that great warrior, David:

“Your word...Your Word is a lamp for my feet. It is a light for my path.” I thought I was on the side of King David and that God was on our side. The old king knew better than that, and I should have too. A light for my feet? A lamp to my path? When the light appeared to me, father David, it was so bright, so piercing, that I couldn’t see the path anymore. Or my feet. I was blinded. For days!

When this light shone, I thought I heard a voice or a presence, with an “aha” as it searched me out and discovered me. Painful, harsh, blinding light.

*[He’s gasping, reenacting, looking up, hands shielding his face]* “Who or what are you, sir?”

I dared to ask.

“I am Jesus,” came the dreadful reply, “whom you persecute,” he said.

The very blaspheming Galilean who caused all the trouble.

*[he’s worked up, now—clenched fists and teeth. He can still remember despising this disgusting blasphemy]* I hated him and his people for their ungodly ways. By heaven, my anger burned with a heat and light....

Or... I thought I was burned with heat and light. But my anger was as nothing now, faced with this light. What I thought was a holy righteous anger seemed little more than irritation. Like the annoyance of being poked in the ribs when you’re sitting comfortably.

And there was a smile in that blessed voice now as he said to me gently but irritatingly: ‘It’s hard for you when you kick against the stick; the cattle prod.’”

And all my proud ideas, my career plans, my self-image, came crashing down like a great big rickety house built on sand. And everything went dark; I could not see.

My darkness, brought on by light... but what did I know of light—before this? What did I know of righteous anger? What of holiness or justice or love? Nothing! The greatest, the highest, the most noble achievement I had managed this far was to be irritated. To feel the Holy One, blessed be he, poking me in the ribs with his cattle prod, his irri-

tant, Jesus. And instead of going where he wanted, I'd kicked out. Silly, educated, self-righteous, ineffectual man.

"Blind guides." That's what he called us Pharisees—this Jesus who made the blind to see. "Won't they both fall into a pit?" My colleagues had to lead me by the hand to our accommodation in Damascus. Straight Street! Straight as the way was, I still blindly bumped into things.

"It's hard for you to kick against the prodding." Jesus was an irritant. Deliberately. God's irritant. Pushing me into the right way.

Peter once told me a story about when he got it wrong—Jesus told him about the cross and Peter tried to talk him out of it. "You're too special and precious to die," Peter had said. Jesus got angry. Peter said it reminded him of a weird episode the week before—Jesus healed a blind man, except—like Peter, like me—he could see, but not clearly enough. Men looking like trees. The man needed more healing, more Jesus. You can have ears to hear but not hear, Jesus used to say. You can have eyes to see and still not see. But Jesus travelled to where people were to heal them. He sought me out to blind me. Seek me out now and heal me, Jesus.

How had I missed the Son's resemblance of the Father? When our first parents sinned back in the Garden, God did not stand apart and judge, but came back. He walked up and down in the Garden, asking awkward questions: "Where are you?" And in our day, he did that again: walking up and down among us, asking "Where are you?" How did I miss it for so long? He came looking for us, calling us.

That's Jesus.

He walks straight up to you ... And he spits in your eyes ... And then ...then ... Your eyes are opened and you TRULY see for the very first time.

Blest be he, the King of the Universe, the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, of whose governance there will be no end. Amen

### **Spoken Hymn of the Evening** Abide With Me

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide  
The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee  
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless  
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness  
Where is death's sting?  
Where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes  
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee  
In life, in death, o Lord, abide with me

**Prayers** (O Christ, who came to save the world, **let us see the world through your eyes**)

O Lord, thank you for giving us the example of St. Paul, whose worldview was transformed in a way that brought the message of the Gospel to light in dramatic fashion. Awaken in us a sense of awe and wonder at how what Christ did for us on the cross changes everything about how we see the world and how we live our lives for him. O Christ, who came to save the world, **let us see the world through your eyes.**

Sometimes, O Savior, our worldview can get blurry and out of focus. For that, we are truly sorry. Through the study of your Word, time in worship and prayer, help us to get refocused on you and clearer in our commitment to your will and your way. O Christ, who came to save the world, **let us see the world through your eyes.**

Work in the hearts of those who have turned away from you and those who seek to do your followers harm. May we be beacons of hope and sources of saving news to all your wandering sheep. O Christ, who came to save the world, **let us see the world through your eyes.**

St. Paul went through many trials in his time serving the Lord, and we, too, struggle as we serve you. Be with those who are sick and injured, hospitalized or homebound, especially Margie and Sonya, Marlis and Terry, Jeff and Evonne, Kirk and Arlis, and all those that we now name silently in our hearts..... Give them an extra measure of your grace, and fill them with the confidence that no matter what happens, you are with them and you will be their rock of refuge. O Christ, who came to save the world, **let us see the world through your eyes.**

All these petitions we offer in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, who did the will of God and lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. And hear us now as we pray the prayer that you taught us....

**Lord's Prayer**

***Our father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.***

***Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

## **Blessing**

Through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. Now may the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you his peace. Amen.

## **Closing Hymn Go My Children with My Blessing**

Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone.  
Waking, sleeping, I am with you; you are my own.  
In my love's baptismal river I have made you mine forever.  
Go, my children, with my blessing—you are my own.

Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure.  
Here you learned how much I love you, what I can cure.  
Here you heard my dear Son's story;  
here you touched him, saw his glory.  
Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure.

## **Mark Your Calendars:**

Sunday Service – March 21<sup>st</sup> at 9am – Nora in-person and streaming –  
Council Meeting after service.  
Wednesday Service – March 24<sup>th</sup> at 7pm – Kirkebo in-person and streaming

*An Adaptation of Thy Will Be Done by Justin Rossow. ©2018 Creative Communications for the Parish, a division of Bayard, Inc., 1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026. 800-325-9414.  
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