

*Sunday Reflection      How can we engage with God through the senses*

**Sight**

As someone who has got quite poor eyesight, the sight that I have got is so precious to me. Especially as I know I've got cataracts developing now and I can feel my eyesight deteriorating.

As with so many parts of our bodies, we only really appreciate the amazing value of our sight as we begin to lose it as a natural part of the ageing process.

The gift of sight is a most wonderful gift to us from God, allowing us to see things of great beauty in the world around us.

Have you ever noticed this word picture in the creation story? Listen to these words from Genesis 2:8-9

*Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.*

**Prayer**

God loves beautiful plants, flowers, and trees and knew we would like to see them too. *Lord God, we praise you and thank you for the gifts of great beauty that you placed in creation. Thank you for the way that things of beauty, such as trees, plants and flowers bring such nourishment to our souls.*

*Thank you too for the gift of sight that makes it possible for us to enjoy their beauty. We ask your forgiveness that so often we take our sight and the beauty around us for granted. We forget what an amazing gift sight is to us; how complex the creation of the eye is! Knit together by your hand in the darkness of our mother's womb, we thank you for your intricate and intimate creation. Amen*

Sight is more than something that takes place just through our eyes.

We can also see with our minds and our hearts

When we say, 'I see', we mean that we understand.

In a way you could say that seeing means understanding.

It means making sense of the world around us

As a child, before falling asleep, I remember lying in the darkness, trying to understand the room around me. The familiar shapes of the daytime took on a new character in the darkness. A dressing gown on the back of the door became a sinister giant and the part-opened doors of the cupboard made unintelligible shadows that could have been all sorts of fearful animals.

In the darkness we can't see clearly. Familiar shapes become distorted and we can't make sense of anything about us.

Our lack of understanding as a child can quickly lead to fear. But when the morning comes, the illusions of the darkness vanish and calm reality is restored. It's just my bedroom again.

The same is true of our spiritual sight. There are times in life when everything feels like night and our world feels dark. Relationships go wrong; we face disappointments; our hopes and dreams are dashed; maybe our work or our health, or our family life is threatened. The reality of the world that we thought we knew becomes distorted (just like the bedroom of my childhood) and fear and misunderstanding can easily take root. When we feel like this, we lose sight of the world as God sees it. And when that happens, we can easily make wrong decisions, take wrong turnings and follow paths of our own choosing, rather than following God's path for our life.

What we need is for dawn to come because light brings clarity.

Jesus said, *'I am the light of the world,'* (John 8:12).

He is the one who dispels the darkness, whose light can never be extinguished. When we see Jesus, the light of the world, order and balance are restored in our spirit. Just as dawn restores the bedroom to its true reality, the presence of Jesus brings order into the chaos of our world.

When Jesus becomes our light, darkness is overcome and, though the circumstances around us may not change, we are strengthened to live by faith because we understand; we 'see' Jesus. He enables us to see the world as it really is; the way that God sees it.

Pause to reflect...

Do I see the world through God's eyes and the paths he wants me to follow?

Are there any blind spots in my vision I need to remove?

Another thing about sight is that it's not only about seeing – either with our eyes or with our heart. It's about being seen.

As well as saying, *'I am the light of the world,'* Jesus also said, *'You are the light of the world.'*

Listen to his words in Matt 5:14-16.

*'You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.'*

Whatever we are is what other people see of Jesus.

What is very clear is that we're not meant to keep Jesus hidden inside us as our own personal secret.

Jesus commands us to go public with our faith. Listen to how Eugene Petersen puts it in the Message:

*God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill... Shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.*

What happens when we go public with our faith?

Light does 3 important things:

- Light brightens everything around it. Just as a dull day is transformed when the sun bursts through the storm clouds, you can transform the atmosphere wherever you are by letting Jesus shine out from within.
- Light guides. When we're struggling along an unfamiliar path in the dark, we need either the street lights or someone with a torch to guide us. You can help to guide someone else through difficult times. Your faith in Jesus can be the light that guides others, removing the stumbling blocks and making the rocky path straight for them.
- Light warns of danger. Just as a lighthouse warns travelers of rocks ahead, your faith can be the clarion call for others when dangers threaten our society. You may be the voice in a community that speaks out with the authority of God. Where things have been distorted, the light of Jesus living in you can restore clarity and bring peace.

Into a world dark with sin, we come as lights – not hidden or covered for our own private use, but shining brightly, publicly, like a city on a hill.

We mustn't hide faith or exercise it only within the family of God. Instead, seeing the world as God sees it means we must speak up, act it out, and go public with our faith.

And that means good deeds, kind actions, demonstrated love – not for recognition or to be applauded but simply to be darkness-dispellers in the place where God puts us, so that others can see Him too.

And though it's hard for us to see God, we need to remember that God sees us the whole time.

We live and think before God's face. Every hope and dream; every longing; every anxious, jealous or lustful thought is seen and known by our heavenly Father.

We are seen completely by Him and known by Him. He knows us by name.

And he loves us just the way we are.

Prayer of Response

*Lord Jesus, would you help us to see you more clearly. Would you open the eyes of our hearts that we may see your glory and worship you with renewed passion?*

*Would you help us to live lives of service for others, filled with compassion and bringing mercy and love wherever we go.*

*Would you help us to bring light into the darkness, leading others towards the light of your presence? May we find the true joy of life filled with your spirit that spills over to all those around us?*

Blessing

**To know you in all things**

Weave a web of your presence around me today.  
Be with my hands as they work.  
Be with my eyes as they see.  
Be with my ears as they hear.  
Be with my tongue as it speaks.  
Be with my feelings and my thoughts.  
Be with the people I meet.  
Be with the things I make.  
Be with the decisions I take.  
Be in and through,  
over and under all,  
that doing and hearing and seeing,  
speaking and making and being,  
I may glimpse your glory,  
and hear your voice  
and joyfully work with you  
to create a new heaven and a new earth.      Amen