

March 22, 2020 | The Fourth Sunday of Lent. | The Second Sunday of Covid-19  
OLD SOUTH CHURCH IN BOSTON

**I Can't See**, a sermon by Nancy S. Taylor, senior minister, based on John 9. 1-11 (Jesus heals a man born blind)

I can't see. I can't see tomorrow, or next week, or next month or this coming summer, let alone next fall. I am so used to seeing ahead, planning ahead, looking ahead, peering around the next corner. I can't see any of that today.

I maintain a large, a paper desk calendar. Opened flat it is 17" wide and 11" high. With a glance, I can take in an entire month at a time. I can see ahead. I can see it all: meetings, appointments, and deadlines. Turn the page, and there's another whole month laid out before me. I can glance across two, three months and sort out my deadlines, my work schedule, projects, and productivity. I can see ahead, plan ahead, work ahead.

I can't do that now. I look at my calendar. Stare at it. It's meaningless. I can't see what I used to be able to see.

But I can see other things.

I can see that the world is undeniably, interconnected. I have always known it. I have always believed it, deeply believed it. Our interconnectedness is, after all, a theological conviction. Christianity affirms that we – all the children of the earth – are related, are kith and kin, one family, dwelling together on this one globe, as children of the one God. I've always known that, believed that. But I can see it now, clear as crystal: how interconnected we all are. I can see that what happens in China matters here and vice versa. I can see that the whole world, despite our differences and distances, is one large, interrelated family living together in a not-so-large home: sharing common spaces, breathing the same air, shopping side by side, purchasing the same items. I can see now, that when someone in this large family gets sick, the rest of us are, indeed, indisputably susceptible.

Here's I what else I can see. I can see the extraordinary blessing of virtual communications. When I think of previous pandemics – what our forebears endured: lack of information, misinformation, social isolation, the lack of instant communication. You think you are sacred. I can only image the panic, the terror, the vulnerability and helplessness they experienced. In comparison, while this virus is a beast – a menacing, looming, beast, readying to pounce – we are all communicating with loved ones, keeping up-to-the-minute on vital information, ordering needed items on-line. We can take in a comedy, or re-watch a favorite oldie that brings an hour's comfort, distraction and entertainment.

Lastly, I am seeing you, this flock, our members, as I have never seen you before. I see images of you gathered for worship in your homes. Through social media, I see your couches and kitchens, your home offices and back yards. I see your children doing chalk art and making forts. I am seeing pictures of the beloved dogs and cats in your lives. I see what you have baked and the colorful schedules you have made to bring order to these days of disorder. I see your humor and determination. I see you adapting, adjusting, modifying, and persevering...notwithstanding the

occasional melt-down, (for which you can be forgiven: this is exhausting, bewildering, concerning.) I see you girding your loins and preparing to do battle with an invisible enemy. I very much like what I am seeing.

Like the man born blind in today's story, there's a lot we can't see. We can't see tomorrow or next month. We can't see the way we used to see.

And yet, have not our eyes been opened? Are we not seeing differently? Has not Christ opened our eyes to new vistas? Do we not take heart from what we see of each other's courage, each other's ingenuity, and defiant fortitude? Do we not see, more clearly than ever, that the source of our hope and our trust is God alone?

In the face of a lurking, looming enemy, we are not without hope, not without agency, not without resourcefulness. Our God has not abandoned us. We are not alone.

What I see – as I have never seen so clearly before – God is with us, and, we are in this together.

#### PRAYER

Oh God of light and sight and insight, of ways of seeing and ways of knowing: teach us to place our trust in you. Quiet our anxious hearts. Grant to us that peace that passes human understanding. We pray this prayer in the name of he who overcame death, even Jesus Christ. Amen.