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St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Newton Lower Falls  
Lent 4A; 1 Samuel 16:1-13 ; John 9:1-38  
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By most estimates, 70% of our sensory receptors are located in our eyes.

Sensory receptors are specialized nerve endings or cells that take stimuli—  
like light, sound, heat, or chemicals—  
and convert them into electrical signals for the brain.  
And sight can be so incredible, can't it?

For example, later on when you come up for Eucharist or a blessing,  
I invite you to look at these beautiful needlepoint altar rail cushions  
that we will dedicate in the prayers of the people today.  
They are true works of art.

Our vision, if it functions, often overpowers our ability to hear, taste, see, smell, and touch.  
Humans have known how folks who are sighted rely heavily on their vision  
For eons without knowing anything about sensory receptors  
I say that because Scripture often uses vision and blindness  
as a metaphor.

We have just two of those instances today.

The Lesson Michael read, taken from 1 Samuel, tells the story of David  
being revealed as the next king of ancient Israel.

Samuel goes to visit a man named Jesse.

Jesse has more than a basketball team worth of sons.

Imagine each son, one by one, being forced to parade  
in front of this stranger for reasons unknown.

After Samuel rejects seven sons, Samuel asks Jesse, "Is there anyone else?"

Jesse finally calls in David, the youngest, the eighth son, from the fields.

Now earlier in the passage, God says to Samuel,

“Do not look on the new king’s appearance or on the height of his stature...  
for The Lord does not see what mortals see;  
they look on the outward appearance,  
but the Lord looks on the heart.” (verse 7).

And yet when David finally comes forward,  
all we hear about are his ruddy cheeks,  
his beautiful eyes,  
and how handsome he is.

This beautiful man becomes one of the best remembered kings of ancient Israel.

David is also unquestionably a visionary in some respects,  
offering to build the first Jerusalem temple for YHWH.

He is also incredibly shortsighted in other respects.

David’s own vision as king,  
much like our confusing introduction to him,  
when we’re told to remember the inside  
then we only hear about the outside,  
David’s vision turns out to be  
a mixed bag, to put it mildly.

Our reading from the Gospel according to John centers  
even more pointedly on vision & lack thereof.

I don’t know what to tell you about how this or any biblical healing “works.”

I **can** tell you that metaphorically, this story is an absolute dream,

I mean, come on, the person who is blind from birth

ends up being one of the few folks able to see Jesus God?

That’s good stuff if you like irony.

These stories from Scripture are really good at reminding us  
about the limits of human sight.

That can be a gift because we do tend to put so much stock in what we see,  
whether we know we’re doing it or not.

,Perhaps that is why when we really want to see something, we close our eyes.

To think.

To meditate or pray.

To kiss.

To savor.

I invite you to close your eyes for the remaining music our musicians  
have to offer this morning. Hear it.

Feel it in your body in a way only live music can be felt.

And see the God-given gift of beauty without your eyes.

And then this week, I invite us all, if we think of it, to close our eyes on occasion  
so that we might have the chance to see the world without our vision,

To experience what our other senses might have to tell us.

What might we be able to see

about ourselves,

about our neighbors,

about the divine,

if we look without our eyes?

Close your eyes.

See the world anew.

Amen.