

## “Faith: Being in Tune with God”

John 9:1-7

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Faith is a gift of God. We receive God’s grace by faith. Jesus taught his disciples about *this* faith and he helped them find the love of God in their daily lives. I want to show you a painting drawn by a German artist, Beate Heinen. She is a professional artist mostly drawing and producing biblical-themed paintings. The title of this painting is “*The Manger and the Cross*” (1986). What do you see in the picture? In this painting, first, the life between birth and death is connected to each other as one. Second, the way to the cross is winding upwards and steep with no green or trees. And lastly, the cross on the hill symbolizes Jesus’ death, costly grace for giving us a new life. Jesus’ incarnation ended with death on the cross: Christmas and Good Friday together. The birth finds its fulfillment in death. Both together but guarantee us life encouraging us to take courage and follow Christ’s way and path to life.<sup>1</sup> The fulfillment of Jesus’ birth, life and death is to hear the ‘good news’ that we find a ‘loving and gracious God’ not ‘an angry, rigid and righteous God’.

We are in the middle of Lent journeying toward Easter. What does Lent teach us? And what spiritual lesson do we need to find in this spiritual practice? The answer is easy and clear. We desire to re-discover the love of God for us through Jesus’ life, ministry, and death. Without understanding Lent, we can’t celebrate the great joy of Easter. Lent is a perfect spiritual chance for your spiritual tune up. Simply speaking, Christian faith is a soul aligning or a tuning process to be in right relationship and in tune with God.

Faith is like a musical instrument tuning process. Just imagine that you are a great player. But what if your piano is out of tune or if you play incorrectly or on your own not following the music score, what does it sound like? It sounds terrible, doesn’t it? But if the piano is well tuned up and you play correctly in accordance with composer’s intention and music score, what does it sound like? Try to hear it again. Musically speaking, “tuning” means to give forth a correct musical sound or to be in harmony or accord. A verb phrase, “tune in”, means to *adjust a radio or television set to so as to receive (signals, a particular station, etc.)*.<sup>2</sup> Spiritually speaking, “tuning” or “being in tune with God” means to find God loving, caring and gracious. Every spiritual practice

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.churchsp.org/mangerandthecross> Accessed March 31, 2017

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/tuning> Accessed March 31, 2017

such as public worship, your personal spiritual devotions, small group participation and joining communion are means of grace that our souls will be aligned with God and tuned with God so as to receive God's grace.

Today's Scripture reading is another great example how Jesus helped his disciples re-align and tune their faith not by the Moses' law or legalism thinking, but by the love of God. In this story, Jesus healed a blind man's blind eyes and restored his sight through his miraculous touch, but the point is not on curing and fixing a man's physical disability. If we focus on Jesus' magical touch to cure a blind man and help him receive eye sight, we are "tuned out" from Jesus' teaching. Shift your focus to why Jesus had to show this miracle to his disciples. In Jesus' times, the handicapped people were regarded as sinners and their handicaps were a result of sin. That's why Jesus' disciples asked their master Jesus saying, "Rabbi, who sinned; this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?" But Jesus' answer surprised them. He says, "You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. Look instead for what God can do." Jesus' understanding of God is 'love based' spirituality, not 'guilt' and 'righteousness' based rule. What messages or challenges Jesus is telling us about? It is simple. We are created to love. So just love everyone without blame or judgment and practice it in our daily lives as Jesus, as the Son of God came to us and show His love to us testifying how much God loved us and the world. Someone has said and it is right. "When you are tempted to lose patience with someone. Think how patient God has been with you all the time."

Jesus' disciples concerned about their master's different approach on the law. According to the Moses' law, their master action was clearly violation against the Jewish law. Surely, Jesus must be keenly aware of understanding of sin in the Moses' law, but his interpretation was different from Jewish religious leaders because he wanted to renew the Moses' law by re-aligning and re-tuning the process by the love of God. In simple summary, Jesus didn't focus on sin and accuse the blind man. Rather Jesus healed the man in his loving care and touch and set him free from his sin. Jesus *loved* him! Compassion was the key value in his spirituality and new image of God. Jesus taught his disciples to love the man and treat him with God's mercy and grace. Pastor Adam Hamilton in our Lenten Small group study book, "Revival" mentions that some Christians have an image of God as an angry, rigid and unmerciful judge for punishing our wrongdoings or a judgmental parent who can never be satisfied but sees our sins and shortcomings and is constantly disappointed with us.<sup>3</sup> This is not why Jesus came to be with us and died for us. The truth of Jesus' incarnation in Christian

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.80

faith is to assure you that you are loved, accepted and special in God's eyes. He wanted us to re-align and to be in right relationship with the loving God.

Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest and writer reminds us of Jesus' teachings. He says "Jesus did not come to change the mind of God about humanity; Jesus came to change the mind of humanity about God." When God sent the only Son to humanity, God's *intentional will* wasn't for punishment or sacrifice of the Only Son. Jesus the Son of God took the cross and died for us, because God *so* loved the world and us and desired to restore a new divine-human relationship through mercy and forgiveness in the cross. Our God is ever loving and forgiving.

Last year July 15 at the Western Jurisdiction conference in Scottsdale Arizona, the hundred official delegates elected the first openly lesbian Bishop in our denomination. Now she serves Mountain Sky Episcopal area which covers Denver, Colorado and the Yellowstone area. Some of you may have heard about news that the South Central Jurisdiction annual conferences made a petition for declaratory decision to the Judicial Committee which is our denomination's "high court". They asked the committee to decide whether Bishop Karen Oliveto's election, consecration and assignment is lawful under the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church or not. The purpose of the petition is to nullify Bishop Karen Oliveto's election because according to the current Book of Discipline, "the United Methodist Church doesn't condone homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." The Judicial Council will meet and begin a hearing session on April 25<sup>th</sup> in Newark, New Jersey. It is time to pray for new Bishop Karen Oliveto and Judicial Council leaders so that they will discern Jesus' teachings of love overriding the Book of Discipline, not being stuck in legalism for the future of our denomination.

A well-known hymn, "Amazing Grace" was composed by John Newton. John Newton was a notorious slave trader around the 1740s in England. One day, when his slave ship was sunk and he was rescued in a violent storm, he experienced God's saving grace. Later, he reflected his personal God's divine touch and grace in this hymn describing, "I once was lost, but now am found; was blind but now I see". Our Christian Faith is all about re-visioning our spiritual sight being in tune with God so that we are able to see God and experience God's love that will shine spiritual blind spots in us and around us.

May the love of God dwell in you and guide you in your daily lives. I pray that you will meet *this* God during this holy season. Amen.