

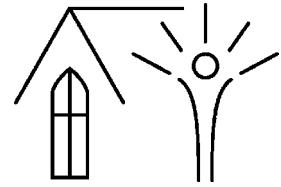


**ROSELLE**  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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*Our Mission Statement:*

*“To Know Christ,  
To Grow in Christ,  
To Show Others Christ”*



October 29, 2006

**Sermon: “Too Blind to Celebrate”**

Mark 10:46 James 3:1–12

Reverend Thomas Kim

*Just before the beginning of the Sunday service at St. Bartholomew’s on Fifth Avenue, New York City, a man wearing a large hat was discovered sitting in the front row. An usher moved to his pew, leaned in, and discreetly asked him to remove his hat. The man replied that he would not. The head usher was then summoned, made the same request, and received the same answer. About that time the president of the women of the parish arrived and was asked to assist. She had the same dismal result. Finally, with only two minutes remaining before the opening hymn, the senior warden of the parish was summoned. He tiptoed up beside the man and tried to seize the hat, but the man nimbly dodged and there was no time for further attempts.*

*As the opening hymn began and the procession entered the church, the man stood, and removed his hat and did not put it on again.*

*At the end of the service, the four frustrated people waited for the man at the rear of the church. The senior warden approached him and said, “Sir, about the hat: perhaps you don’t understand, but in the Episcopal church, men do not wear hats at worship.” The man replied, “Oh, but I do understand. I’ve been an Episcopalian all my life. As a matter of fact, I’ve been coming to this church regularly for two years and I’ve never met a soul. But this morning I’ve met an usher, the head usher, the president of the church women, and the senior warden.” (Illustrated Unlimited, pp. 89-90)*

Do we see right? Do we see people with wide-open eyes? Do we have the same problem? If so, we are seriously blind, and not able to celebrate God’s blessings for us.

The Bible says we are created in God’s image. Please, look around. Can you see God through people around you? They carry the image of God. They are people of God; they are the reason for celebration today because you meet God through them, with them and among them. How often do we forget that?

When Martin was 2 years old, a few weeks after Phyllis came home from the hospital after two months of hospitalization due to her 13 ½ weeks of prematurity; her birth weight was only 2 pounds 4 ounces. Out of nowhere, Martin asked his mother, “Mom, do you love me?” Surprised by this sudden and awkward question, Gail shrugged her shoulders and responded with a smile, “Of course I do. I love you, Son. I am your mother.” Hearing this, he said, “Thank you, Mom.” Martin needed to hear of his mother’s love for him.

Later while Martin was playing with his mother, he unexpectedly told his mother, “I wish you were my mom.” Not knowing where this statement came from, his mother told him, “I AM your Mother.” Hearing this confirmation, Martin hugged his mom and said, “I am so happy that you are my mom.” While Gail and I paid attention to only the fragile and tiny little baby girl, we forgot to recognize the blessing with our son. Somehow he reminded us of our blindness at that

time. He was saying, "Hey, I am here, too! Will you pay attention to me as well?" We were blind not to celebrate our son's being with us.

Let's go to the Gospel lesson for today. At one point Jesus and his disciples were passing through the city of Jericho, some fifteen miles northeast of Jerusalem. As Jesus was leaving the city, there was one man in particular who got Jesus' attention—a blind beggar named Bartimaeus.

By all definitions Bartimaeus was a nobody. In society's eyes he was a worthless blind man who begged for food and money outside the city gate all day. No one really paid much attention to him. It was almost as if he didn't exist. The truly amazing thing was that Bartimaeus called out to Jesus with a title that no one had used before, "Son of David, have mercy on me." It is ironic: Blind Bartimaeus knew who Jesus was while the people who surrounded Jesus did not. Who was blind, Bartimaeus or others?

In 1773, a great revival was sweeping across America. A few months after one of these revivals, a white man and a black man were discussing its effect on their lives. The white man said, "For three months after that revival, I suffered in an awful turmoil before God spoke to my soul and gave me peace."

The black man replied, "I know what you mean. I went through the same thing for nearly two weeks myself."

The white man was disturbed by this news. "Why is it that God spoke to you so much sooner than He did to me?"

The black man answered kindly, "The reason is that you white men have so much clothing on you. When Christ calls, you can't run to him. But us poor colored folks usually have only one ragged coat. When we hear his call, we can throw it off instantly and run to him." Who is blind here?

That story reflects an unfortunate social situation that even a century of progress has not rectified, but it is also a simple way of stating a profound truth. Some of us would have to throw off so many outer layers, such as our sophistication, our somewhat cynicism, and our secular preoccupation with material security that it could be difficult for us to see Jesus and to run gladly to him as Bartimaeus did. Somehow we are blind to our blessings, and we can not see the reasons for celebration even though we are surrounded by God, and we are surrounding God as well. Look around you again!

Today, we are here to celebrate our commitment. As we celebrate our commitment, I would like to suggest three areas to commit that we easily forget, or ignore or skip, or we are often blind, but we might consider to commit.

The first area is the commitment to love God. I know that sounds too boring, but think about it. I mean that the commitment to love God involves time. We must give God time which the most precious thing we have equally, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Before I married Gail, the officiating pastor told me a tool for a successful marriage. He told me that the secret of a happy marriage life is to *"create time as much as you can to spend with your wife, because then you have a better chance to have a happier marriage. Don't neglect your wife and family in the name of the ministry. Don't underestimate the value of the time you have together. Being together produces intimacy."* I believe it is the same with God. In two career families with busy and complicated schedules, people have just such frenetic lifestyles. The cross for the modern people is struggling to create time for God when your schedule would deny it. The crown is God himself. You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

The second area of commitment is being committed to the little things. Mother Teresa said once, *"We can't do the big things, you and I. We're not capable of them. But do the little things faithfully."* To find the little things to serve the Lord faithfully is a form of holiness within our grasp. The smile smiled, the courtesy rendered, the dinner prepared, the hug hugged, the birthday remembered, the flowers sent, the compliment given, the meeting met. These little things will change us and the lives of all.

The third thing you can commit is perhaps the hardest of all. It is the serious commitment to trying to let God love you. This serious commitment is the best way to care for yourselves. We know how to care for others, but often we neglect ourselves in the name of caring others. We are very good at trying to love other people, and we sincerely try to love. The Roselle United Methodist Church is maybe one of the best churches in caring others, however, how often we put our selves down. Sometimes we are so harsh on us; unfairly criticize ourselves and undermine what we are doing as a church. We

don't appreciate or celebrate our own ministry and mission. But to open yourselves to the rich outpouring of God's love, to put yourselves totally under God's grace—that's something else. I mean, we know how sinful we are, how unworthy, how shamed. It's better and easier to give all the active energy in working at loving others—and thereby deflecting the attention away from ourselves—than to be the passive, restful recipient and object of love, especially God's love. It seems we find it hard to tolerate the fact that God, knowing what God knows, can love us.

Seven-year-old boy John with chicken pox and a rash covering his body and face came to the doctor's office. He was irritated by the itching, and kept scratching his face. His doctor gave him a warning, "John, don't scratch your face. If you keep doing it, it will hurt your face, and no one would give you a kiss. So be patient even though it is so irritated."

John could not stand with itching, and do it again and said, "I don't worry, my mom still loves me, and will give me kiss." I think he was right, his mother would give him a kiss no matter how many scars he had on his face. It is the same with God in our relationship. No matter what we are and who we are, and how we are, we are in need of God mercy and love. The Gospel asks our response to a call from Jesus and to commitment: The commitment to love God, to be faithful in little things, and let God love us, whether you are a blind person with a dirty cloak, or an honorable person with a fancy dress.

So, are you ready to see blessings from God given to you today? If so, you aren't blind to celebrate today.

Let us pray together, *A COVENANT PRAYER IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION* on your hymnal #607.

I am no longer my own, but thine.  
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.  
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.  
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,  
exalted for thee or brought low by thee.  
Let me be full, let me be empty.  
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.  
I freely and heartily yield all things  
to thy pleasure and disposal.  
And now, O glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.  
And the covenant which I have made on earth,  
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.