

A Vision of God by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 21061029
Job 42:1-6, 10-17 and Mark 10:46
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Vision is a curious thing. Two men, although they were blind, were able to see who Jesus was. The author of the Gospel of Mark writes in a particularly revealing way about vision and blindness. From chapters eight through ten, Mark has sandwiched three occasions when the disciples were blind to who Jesus was. The slices of bread around the sandwich were the healing of the blind man in Bethsaida¹ and the healing of the blind Bartimaeus. One slice of meat in the sandwich was Peter, who, just after confessing Jesus as Messiah, rebuked Jesus for saying he was going to be arrested and crucified.² It was as if he was saying, “You can’t let the public know that about the Messiah.”

The next slice of meat in the sandwich was the group of disciples arguing about who was the greatest, after Jesus told them the second time he was going to be killed.³

The next slice must have been swiss, because it’s the cheesiest part of the sandwich. James and John didn’t have a clue. They wanted Jesus to seat them on either side when he sat in his glory after he was to have been killed.⁴

Bartimaeus was a blind beggar sitting on the side of the road in Jericho. This was the last town on Jesus’ way to the holy week entrance into Jerusalem. It would be his last week of life. Bartimaeus, even though he was physically blind, could see who Jesus was. “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”⁵ “Son of David” was a term for Messiah. Blind Bartimaeus asked for mercy and was given sight. Two blind men see who Jesus is, but the disciples, the ones closest to Jesus, were blind about him and what he meant.

During his entire ministry, Jesus tried to get his followers to see God. He wanted them to have a vision of what God and God’s rule were like. The disciples, as is natural for humans, desired power, and this blinded them. They were expecting a Messiah who would gather them together and militarily throw off Roman rule.

Jesus kept trying to teach his followers God’s order of things. With God, the first will be last. Beggars will have dignity. Outcasts will be included. The blind will see. This is the vision of God that Jesus gives us. Too often, things get in our way, blocking our vision of God’s realm.

For the past year, the vision team met and talked and prayed, seeking a clearer vision about this church and what God wants it to be and to do. The congregation has received and accepted their vision. Now, members have committed to working on task forces to make the vision reality.

Read along with me, the vision statement that you’ll find printed on the front of the bulletin under “Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ.” “Dedicated to spiritual renewal, we strive to be an accepting, thinking and serving community of faith.”

Right now, about forty people are taking part in 4 different spiritual renewal groups where they are talking with each other and thinking about what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ and how they can support each other in their daily lives of following in his footsteps. Two groups

¹Mark 8:22-26

²Mark 8:32

³Mark 9:34

⁴Mark 10:37

⁵Mark 10:47

of Companions in Christ, meet on Thursdays, exploring God's grace. On Sunday afternoons a group of young women are engaging in Conversations of the Heart. During Sunday evening Phoenix Affirmations, we are studying what it means to love God, love our neighbors, and love ourselves. We are looking to call a Director of Spiritual Growth and Christian Education to further this work of spiritual growth.

As an *accepting* community of faith, this is a place of prayer where all people are welcome. A young man is exploring his call to Christian ministry because of his involvement here. Two hundred fifty students gathered here Tuesday evening to learn about global warming and dedicate themselves to reducing our carbon dioxide emissions. We support a student minister intern to coordinate our ministry with students.

As a *thinking* community of faith, we don't simply accept what the minister tells us to believe, or follow some unexamined doctrine. We read the scriptures in their context. We discuss them with one another. In a loving and accepting atmosphere, we grow in understanding about what Jesus came to show us.

As a *servicing* community of faith, we put love into action. Members call on and provide meals for one another in time of need. We support a director of pastoral visitation to coordinate this work. Along with University students, we provide respite for parents of special needs children on the first Friday night of each month. Each board, committee and Sunday school group provides monthly meals for the Allied Churches shelter in Burlington. The Women's Ministry has taken on the Family Abuse Services shelter. They provide toys for children, toiletries for residents, and they're going to paint and decorate one of the rooms.

Each Sunday, we gather here in this room to worship and praise God and gain a better vision of God. We have the best music program in town with dedicated musicians and choir members. Betty Dillashaw and Ken Sheldon take individuals and unify them into beautiful choirs of handbells and chimes. We renew our faith and our dedication to God's realm.

I'm excited about Elon Community Church, and its vision for the future. I am committed to the vision and Sue and I are supporting it with our pledge of time, talents, and money.

Our vision as a church is to enable all people to have a vision of God.

Join us to make that vision a reality. I invite you to prayerfully consider your estimate of giving to God's work through the mission and ministry of Elon Community Church.