

1 Samuel 16:1-13

John 9:1-41

Ephesians 5:8-14

“Our souls are restored; as goodness  
and mercy follow us.” AMEN!

The people were divided because of his words  
And wondered how God might be revealed

By a man born blind by sin  
His fate was sealed

Jesus walked along and began to heal

One would think the people would rejoice  
At the healing of the man born blind

But division came instead  
Jesus healed at the wrong time

They lost compassion and reason  
Our main lesson this Lenten season

One does not need to be sighted  
To see the ways our people are divided

While people look to be educated  
In places suspect and even  
From church many are isolated

Passionate about God the population claims

in poll and witness

But never darken a church's door, the zealot confesses

It's ironic that so many say they're Christian  
But on Sunday morning there's hardly any traffic  
At the intersection

Where faith and life are even divided

It is not only Christianity that suffers  
But our Jewish and Muslim siblings do, too  
In community are only

a few people at the temple or worship space  
No longer are they the meeting place

The once popular American tradition  
Of gathering on Saturday/Sunday  
now under suspicion

Some say it's all about the offering  
While ignoring the person on the corner suffering

Concluding they must deserve it

Others have been hurt  
By religious interpretations that make them  
Feel like dirt

Or less because of how they present or think

If one's aware then one knows  
the church has a tendency  
To be God's worst enemy

Not only God's but love's voice is hushed  
As judgment and fear come close to home

While there's an issue in our culture too  
People are falsely connected our  
Spiritual and physical health is neglected

We choose anti-social media and chat rooms  
But can't seem to shake the gloom  
That come from those places  
Of untouchable, airbrushed digital faces

There's another truth to hear, too  
Organized religion has not always been true

True to its calling, religion has strayed  
People are repulsed by the division displayed

Ignoring the presence of God in the other  
Forgetting that God is more like a Mother,  
Than a suspicious Big Brother

Churches tend to think  
As long as people are blind the welcome mat is out

But let them start to share their light,  
and see God with opened eyes  
Often next is a horrible fight

Because

Politics and power are are no strangers to religion  
When leaders claim to speak for God  
our holiness is recognized as fraud

And no not one will stay in a church long  
If no one there can admit that sometimes  
Everyone, even the leader, is wrong

For Jesus even said those who claim to be right  
Jesus said, "You have no sight."

For there are parts of God unknown  
New creations God has sown

Jesus said, You're blind when you claim to see  
That you know everything about me

The temple leaders, the Pharisees  
Were a lot like our pastors, priests, and rabbis  
Who lead shrinking communities

Fear came to them and they let their  
words divide and no one could hear  
The words from Jesus...  
God's love is already inside

Of you and of me  
Burning to be let out

The sound and sight of God's love  
Into the holy community we feel  
The Spirit's shove

And more, those who admit being blind  
to all of God's way  
Receive salvation on the last day.

AMEN!

Beloved Community, today's ministry minute comes from our dear Sister in Christ Terri Schmitt. Terri is a wildlife educator (which is code for a high/middle school teacher). Just kidding, she is that too but she's a wildlife educator for Florida Mammal Association. In this position, Terri teaches about native Florida ecosystems and how people can benefit from them. She can be seen at various festivals and other public events along the panhandle with one of the wildlife ambassadors. Her first experience working with wildlife was

in 1989. She has a master's degree in Biological Sciences. Join me in welcoming Terri for our ministry minute.

(Terri's Ministry Minute)

So it was a little tougher to link the message today with Terri's talk about Florida wildlife. But wisdom came out when Colleen said that Terri is teaching us to not be blind to the needs of wildlife protection. :-)

Clearly, Colleen should be consulted during my week of study.

Let us stand and sing!