Mark 8:22-26

22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?”

24 He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.”

25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him home, saying, “Don’t even go into[e] the village.”

Good morning, everyone! My name’s Mandy, I’m a senior Art Education major. Of my four years at Augustana, I feel my time spent in the art studio has been some of the most life changing. Having two or three hours (or four, or five, or six...) set aside each day to meditate and create has been instrumental in my development as an artist, as well as a human being. As an art major, I’ve become fascinated with the act of seeing, which might explain a little about
the reading. The gospel I’ve chosen for today is... interesting. Okay, I’ll stop being polite - it’s weird. It starts out normally enough: Jesus traveling and happening upon a blind man asking for sight. We know the story; we’ve heard this before, we tune out. But then something unusual happens - Jesus asks the man if he can see, to which the man replies, “I see people; they look like trees.”

I don’t remember this from any of the other healing miracles.

Mark is the only gospel to record this story, using five simple verses that leave us with so many questions. Why did Jesus not restore the man’s sight completely the first time around? Was there something the man learned by seeing people as trees? I struggled with this question for a long time, before finding solace in the drawing studio once again.

The drawing studio is my sanctuary. When I’m drawing a model, I can completely tune out the world. I’m a better person in the studio. I’m engaged, I’m focused, I take risks. Of course, this didn’t happen automatically. To begin drawing from the model, you must first take an introductory course. I’m sure even non-art majors have heard the horror stories about “the Chair”. “The Chair” is the first drawing you complete in Drawing I. It involves around 15 people sitting in a large circle around a plain wooden chair, intently staring, measuring angles, erasing and redrawing. This may sound insane to you - it did to me at first. The purpose of the activity is to faithfully render the old wooden chair according to what you see, and not what you think you see.

Trust me, it’s a lot easier said than done.
I battled with the chair for two weeks, sharing the trenches with my fellow students. I couldn’t understand what I was missing— I mean, I was 18 years old, had been drawing for the majority of my life, I knew what a chair looked like. And still I struggled. I kept looking and looking and looking. Every time I thought I had something down perfectly, our professor Scott would come around, point out some transparently simple flaw, and it was back to the drawing board, if you pardon the pun.

I’d like to say that I came to some sort of revelation after finishing the chair, a breakthrough, an artistic epiphany. But I didn’t. I did, however, manage to catch a tiny glimpse of the lesson Scott was trying to teach. It was like when I was a child trying to name animals. Anything small and furry with pointed ears was a kitty. A rabbit was a kitty, the skunk costume my parents made me wear for Halloween was a kitty, and to my parents’ horror, the possum in my grandparent’s barn was a kitty. I was going by sight alone, and missing something else essential.

It wasn’t until Drawing II and I read an essay of John Berger’s that I discovered a bit about what seeing actually was. John Berger is an English artist, critic, and writer. In his essay “A Professional Secret”, he says this: “Image-making begins with interrogating appearances and making marks. Every artist discovers that drawing— when it is an urgent activity— is a two-way process. To draw is not only to measure and put down, it is also to receive... The encounter of these two energies, their dialogue, does not have the form of question and answer. It is a ferocious and unarticulated dialogue. To sustain it requires faith. It is like a burrowing in the
dark, a burrowing under the apparent. The great images occur when the two tunnels meet and join perfectly.”

When I read this, I never knew it would change my life. But when I started drawing from the model using this as a framework, I would never see the same way. This was what I was missing. I needed to learn the hard way that no amount of “looking” could result in “seeing”. There needed to be an exchange of energy between the subject and the artist. You must use all of the technique, knowledge and skill you’ve developed over the years, while simultaneously forgetting everything you know, and seeing with new eyes. A perpetual state of questioning. I wish I could put into words exactly how this feels, but I expect many of you feel the same way about your own experiences- that wonderful feeling when everything just “clicks” when you’re writing your senior thesis, or the intense experience of a runner’s high.

So it is with the Gospel. Just as I had no other way of seeing when I was drawing the chair, the blind man knew no other sight other than the people he was mistaking for trees. In this state of confusion, frustration, incompleteness, we learn something. Jerry Starling, in his analysis of the Gospel, states “We should never assume that, because we can see some truth, we know all truth.” This has been a reoccurring theme in both my faith and my artistic life. To be honest human beings we must recognize what we see is flawed, and be humble enough to admit that there is more.

I was blind before I had an art class. Now, after four years of study, I’m still blind. But not in the same way. I did a little digging last night on Moodle, and found the Drawing I syllabus. As an objective, Scott lists “Cultivate a passion for seeing”. I truly believe that my time
at Augustana has done that. But, like Jesus’ first attempt with the blind man, I can’t see everything yet. I’m persistently trusting, experiencing, questioning, and I know that He will keep showing me new ways of seeing as I continue my journey.
Morning Worship  
Friday, November 9, 2012

Prelude  
“Fairest Lord Jesus”  
arr. Stan Pechel  
Michael Seeley accompanied by Marilyn Schempp

Welcome/announcements  
Invocation

Litany – An Artist’s Prayer  
read responsively by line

L: Lord, make me see your glory in every place:  
C: Shall not that earthly fire by thine burn low  
L: Extinguished by the great light of thy grace?  
C: Dear Lord, I cry to thee for help,  
L: O raise Me from the misery of this blind woe,  
C: Thy spirit alone can save me: let it flow  
L: Through will and sense, redeeming what is base.  
C: Thou hast given me on earth this godlike soul,  
L: And a poor prisoner of it thou hast made  
C: Behind weak flesh-walls; from that wretched state  
L: Low can I rescue it, how my true life find?  
C: All goodness, Lord, must fail without thy aid:  
L: For thou alone hast power to alter fate.  
- Michelangelo

Scripture  
Mark 8:22-26

Message  
Mandy Klein Seeley  
Hometown: Sheldon, IA  
Major: Art Education

Hymn  
“Be Thou My Vision”  
ELW #793 vv. 1 & 2

Prayer and Lord’s Prayer

Benediction

Dismissal

Postlude  
“How Firm a Foundation”  
arr. Stan Pethel  
Michael Seeley, euphonium - accompanied by Marilyn Schempp, organ
CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chapel Worship, MWF 10 AM, Sundays at 11 AM, Tuesdays at 9 pm (Common Ground)

Catholic Mass: Sundays 8 PM (confession - 7:30), and first Tuesday of each month at 10 am

A CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN THE NATIONAL PARKS - Lisa Larson, representing CMNP, will be on campus Monday, November 12. Meet her in the commons to learn about exciting opportunities for summer work in one of our beautiful National Parks!

GUATEMALAN GIFT SALE- Campus Ministry is sponsoring a sale of handmade Guatemalan Gifts again this year. The sale will be Thurs. and Fri. on Nov. 15th and 16th from 10:00 am - 3 pm on Student Street, right outside the Dining Hall entrance. The time commitment is broken down in hour segments. The profits go directly to the artisans in Guatemala to afford them a sustainable income. Let Carol in the chapel office know if you can help - 274-5403.

SERVICE LEARNING TRAVEL: Campus Ministry will sponsor Spring break trips to Florida to help renovate a camp or to Spain where we will walk the Camino de Santiago! Inquire in the chapel office for details.

SPRING BREAK IN SPAIN! Join the Pilgrimage course walking the Camino de Santiago, 110 KM of one of the oldest and most famous Christian pilgrimage routes in Europe. Cost is $2800. See Pastor Paul or Professor Sam Ogdie if you have questions.

DIANA BUTLER BASS author of Christianity After Religion and a prominent observer of trends on the religious landscape, will speak in Sioux Falls November 9 and 10. As a sponsoring congregation, 10 students will be able to attend for free! See Pr. Paul if you are interested!

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Sunday (11/11) Morning Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul
Monday (11/12) Sung Morning Prayer, 10 am - Augie Choir
Tuesday (11/13) Koinonia group, 10 am - Chapel Narthex
Wednesday (11/14) Holy Communion, 10 am - Pr. Kathryn Timpany,
1st Cong. Church
Friday (11/16) Morning Worship, 10 am - Alison Peymann, Sr. Spkr.
Morning Worship
Friday, November 9, 2012

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