

9TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

07/29/18 Mount Calvary, West View

GENESIS 9: 8-17, EPHESIANS 3: 14-21, MARK 6: 45-56

HYMNS: O BLESSED SPRING LSB #595, O LOVE HOW DEEP LSB # 544,

O GOD FORSAKE ME NOT LSB #731

Theme: Recognize Jesus?

+ Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN +

Our Text is a continuation of St. Mark's Gospel, the 6th Chapter:

About the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw Him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, for they all saw Him and were terrified... And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized Him and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard He was. And wherever He came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored Him that they might touch even the fringe of His garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

Have you ever wondered why we are able to recognize anything? Liam is astounding from time to time. He looks right at a letter standing all alone, and instantly tells you what it is. Show him a number, and he will tell you what it is. Science tells us that the processing of visual data happens in the ventral visual stream. This is a hierarchy of areas in the brain which helps in object recognition. We can easily recognize different sized objects and put them in the same category and this happens because of the invariances we develop over time. Whenever we look at any object, our brain

extracts the features and in such a way that the size, orientation, illumination, perspective just do not matter for you remember an object by its shape and inherent features. It doesn't matter how the object is placed, how big or small or what side is visible to you, there is a hierarchical build-up of invariances first to position and scale and then to viewpoint and more complex transformations requiring the interpolation between several different object views. You recognize because you process your vision with your memory and the things you would expect to be true about what you are seeing. We have cells in our visual cortex that respond to simple shapes like lines and curves. As we move along the ventral stream, we get more complex cells which respond to more complex objects like faces, cars etc. Neurons along the ventral stream show an increase in receptive field size as well as in the complexity of their preferred stimuli. And to add to the remarkability of our talent to recognize and categorize objects, we do it almost instantly or in the case of recognizing names, within a few guesses. Scientists surmise that there is some form of feed-forward processing of information going on. In other words, the information processed by the cells in the current level in the ventral stream hierarchy is used by the next level. This helps speed up the process by a huge factor.

Machines cannot do this. Given an object to remember, such as a chair, if you move it one inch to the left, it sees it as a new object. Rotate it 2 degrees, it's a new object. Put a person in the chair, it's a new object, no longer the "chair" it remembers.ⁱ

You may be wondering why I bring this up. I bring it up because maybe this explains why we have recognition problems in our text. Jesus had just fed the more-than-5,000 and according to John's record of the events, the people were ready to make Jesus King! Not needing *that* problem to entice the disciples along with all the other problems He has to deal with on account of their fleshly natures, He dismissed the disciples to go to the other side, to Bethsaida, a happening town of fishing fame, the home of Peter, Andrew, and Philip. Ah, this should be no problem for the disciples; they are going home, really. Of course, this is the same town that Jesus had rebuked in Matthew for not receiving him and believing his words but let us not dwell on that now ó this is a happy occasion! They are heading home, while Jesus dismisses the crowd.

After taking leave of them, He goes off to pray, and though it is evening, the disciples are *still* rowing along. You think they would be moving their arms a bit more in the rowing capacity eager to get home, but now we get word that the wind was quite against them. Jesus, having compassion on them because they were like fishermen without a pole, or sailors without favorable wind, waved His hand and pushed them to the shore! No He did not! Sometimes you have to go through some hard times to appreciate the good times, and many times it is simply God reminding you to recognize, "My grace is sufficient for you."

So, when the time came for Jesus to head on out, He walked on the sea. It was, after all, the easiest way to get to Bethsaida! Now Jesus is a very busy Man and was

meaning to leave them to their occupation of rowing to the shore, but they were sore afraid, for they **did not recognize Him!** Quoting Scripture, *“but when they saw Him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, for they all saw Him and were terrified.”* *They thought it was a ghost;* not that they thought it was God in the flesh doing a perfectly natural thing, for if God wants to walk on water, who is going to tell Him, “Do not do that!”? *They thought it was a ghost;* not Jesus the miracle working Who had done much more amazing things in my mind so far. *They thought it was a ghost;* they simply did not recognize Jesus when they saw Him. The synopsis that we opened our discussion about recognition with at the beginning of this meditation were simply not functioning, misfiring, scrambling to try and make sense of what it is seeing, much as a computer runs through all its memory to recognize the object, and epic fails.

That is the problem with fear. Fear equals sin. Why do you think Jesus tells them not to be afraid? They are despairing God’s grace and mercy. When you fear, you no longer trust in God above all things. Fear clouds judgment and makes thoughts become irrational. Fear begets worry, and who can add one moment to their life in worrying? Jesus says “Do not worry” about anything, for God knows what you need before you even ask. Fear not; the Lord is with thee. But if there is fear, there is no thought that Jesus is near, and therefore He is never recognized as Who He is.

In contrast, look at the people on the shore. *And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized Him and ran about the whole region and began to bring*

the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard He was. They had not problem recognizing Jesus as the Savior Who can cure every disease and overcome any hardship! Even just touching the fringe of the garment ó recognize this as a testimony of the woman with the 12 years of blood flow! ó they would receive their request BY FAITH! Notice the absence of fear; they can see and recognize Jesus. Faith Chases away fear.

Ah, the rubber hits the road! Faith saves; all else caves. (Made that up myself.) The purpose of this Sunday is to rest not on your own ability and reason and strength, but to venture forth by faith. Your life is one of opposites. In the beginning, you were a sinner in need of Salvation; separated from God by a chasm so wide you could not see the other side. Sin does that. It blinds and shields so that you have distorted vision, and cannot recognize the peril you are in. You cannot see how high or wide or deep the peril is for there is nothing in you to recognize your sad state of affairs. People who do not have Christ cannot help you, for it is truly the blind leading the blind. Yet, Jesus fixed all that at the cross. Recognizing your need for Salvation, He came down from Heaven, was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary and was made man; was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He will come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end, but let us dwell on the Salvation for right now. He saved you with His flesh and blood through the Baptism you received not because you

saw this as a good thing to do, but by faith are made an heir and child of God, opposite of what you once were!

Noah was given a sign in our Old Testament reading, a sign that showed the promise of God that He will no more destroy the world to restart again. That is what the rainbow is. Many will look at it as a prism, a reflection, refraction and dispersion of light rather than the promise of God. Many will see a rainbow and remember the Irish promise of a pot-o-gold at the end, rather than the promise of a new life from the grave. You and I have been reminded that it is the Promise of eternal life from our Creator, and the promise that you are grounded and rooted in love and can truly now comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of the love Christ has for you filling that chasm of separation ó the opposite of what you once were.

Truly we have been blessed far more than we deserve, but do not cower from such knowledge ó lift up your heads! You have been saved by the Christ on the cross and recognize every cross as the place of Salvation. Some will tell you that a crucifix is a horrible thing to see, and that a bare cross is the new way to see Jesus. I say as horrible as it is, I recognize what my Savior went through to secure my place in Heaven, and I want you and all people to recognize Him as well. Recognize the Baptismal font as the birthplace of your New Man and recognize the body and blood as the continuation of the great grace and forgiveness to keep you in the one true faith. Do not fear Jesus, welcome Him and tell others where He is found so that they may recognize Him too. In our Triune

God's Name we pray. **AMEN.**

+ AND NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL
UNDERSTANDING KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN UNION WITH
CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. AMEN+

There are only two days on my calendar...today and the day of

judgment

ⁱ If you are interested, you can read up on Gabor filters and HMAX model. The current state-of-the-art technologies can achieve an accuracy of around 65-70% depending on the dataset and conditions. This link might be helpful.
<https://prateekvjoshi.com/2012/07/19/how-do-we-recognize-objects/>