

## It's Good to Be Seen

Rev. Dewey Johnson, Pastor Emeritus

*Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

- James 1: 17 (NRSV)

In 1976 I went way more than 15 rounds with my first kidney stone. I named it Rocky, same as the movie which had come out a few weeks earlier. It really didn't move around much, terrible footwork. And all it could deliver was a rabbit or kidney punch, but it packed a real wallop. Initially, I had no idea what was causing the pain. Cheri woke up at 5:00am to find me crawling on the floor, as though that would somehow help me escape the backache. She figured it must be a kidney stone.

We were living in Galveston, so she drove to John Sealy Hospital as I squirmed. Although John Sealy was commonly called a charity hospital, everyone I knew went there. What I didn't know was that those who could pay for their treatment entered by a different door than I did. I entered through the door for charity patients, which basically meant I would receive no treatment until Hollywood released Rocky II. (Another sermon.)

Of course, I didn't help my case. As I waited for treatment I fidgeted, sat, stood, walked, lay down on the cold hard floor, even did the Funky Chicken trying to get some relief. Little did I know that such gyrations made the hospital staff think that I was a drug addict. Faking a kidney stone was one of the ruses used by addicts at the time, to get painkillers.

I waited and waited. Hour after hour. I asked a nurse when a doctor could see me. Not only did she tell me to wait my turn, but she actually said that having a baby hurts more. A sexist comment if I ever heard one! I would have left the building, but there was nowhere else on a Saturday afternoon to be treated.

And so I waited and waited and waited. Finally, at 3:15 in the afternoon, nine hours after I arrived, I was on my hands and knees on the floor when I heard a familiar voice saying, "Dewey, is that you?"

I looked up and recognized an intern who went to our church, First Presbyterian. He had been walking down a corridor and saw a person whom he thought was a drug addict trying to get a pain med prescription. But looking more closely he recognized the gyrations as those of his associate pastor. And at that point I knew I was saved. He'd see to it that I got treatment. And I did.

Have you ever said to someone, "It's good to see you?" And this person says, "It's good to be seen." The world is filled with smart alecks, but as I learned with the intern, "It's good to be seen" is a fitting response to the scripture at the top of the page.

*"With whom there is no variation due to a shadow of turning"* means that God, who is known in the Bible for a countenance that shines like the sun, never turns his face away from us, never gives any of his children the cold shoulder, never leaves us in the dark (or a shadow of God's turning.) We can count on God's seeing us, even in our desperation.

And not only that, but *"Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."* This is the good news that God not only sees us but graces us with **what is fitting** for the situation we're in. Now, there is no mention that what God gives won't require patience on our part. God's timing isn't our timing. No mention that what God gives is what we want as opposed to need. No mention that what God gives is going to make things easy or make our problem go away. Still, whatever God gives can lead to our saying, "It's good to be seen. Very good. Thank you."