Look at Us

By: Brigitta Goshen

Read: Acts 3:1-10

***3*** *Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.* ***4*** *And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.”* ***5*** *And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.* ***6*** *But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” Acts 3:3-6*

Has anyone else noticed that our social interactions have become super odd since the pandemic started? I ran into a friend at the grocery store recently, and she immediately recognized me and started speaking to me. Since we were both wearing masks, it took me more than a few seconds to identify this person. I had to pause and study my friend's eyes until it clicked in my mind. This extended eye-contact feels a little intimate and uncomfortable. I find this to be such an odd part of this new COVID reality.

In this passage from Acts, Peter and John are going into the temple, and they find a man with disabilities begging for alms outside the door. Peter paused and "directed his gaze at him" and said to the man, "look at us." I imagine that this man's gaze was fixed at the ground. The man had been ignored and rejected by so many that he started to believe that he was worthless. The man was hiding his face out of shame at his situation and to protect himself from the blow of rejection. Peter pauses and looks at the man; Peter meets his gaze and asks the Holy Spirit to heal him. Now before he was physically healed, Peter restored part of his humanity by treating him like a child of God. Peter stopped knowing full well that he didn't have alms to give the man. Yet, he still stopped and asked the Holy Spirit to heal him.

What prevents us from stopping for our neighbor who is asking for help? Is it because we're too busy? Do we think we have nothing to give? Do we live in an area that we aren't even aware of the people in our community asking for help? Or is it because we are uncomfortable with the vulnerable act of gazing into another person's eyes and realizing that we could easily be in that situation.

*Prayer*: God, please help me to meet the gaze of the suffering in the world. Remind me to take the time to treat everyone as your beloved children. Remind me that even when I feel like I don't have anything to give, I can advocate for social change in my community. Help me to discern where you are calling me to engage with the suffering of the world. Show me how to know, love, and serve you better. Amen