

LENT IV, YEAR A

March 19, 2023

The Venerable Patricia Soukup
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church
Los Alamos, New Mexico

- [1 Samuel 16:1-13](#)
- [Ephesians 5:8-14](#)
- [John 9:1-41](#)
- [Psalm 23](#)

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, o Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen

Anybody who has a basic knowledge of circuitry knows that in order for electricity to flow, you have to have a closed circuit. A closed circuit provides an uninterrupted, endless path for the flow of current. If there is a gap somewhere in the circuit (such as a loose wire), the circuit remains open, and current cannot flow through it. Ok, so that's the extent of my personal knowledge of electrical engineering. Well, that and the fact that connecting the wires backwards in a ceiling fan will trip every breaker in the box and cause smoke to come out of the ceiling. And that's probably why I am not an electrician.

Anyway, I want to share with you a story that I read a few years ago about an electrical circuit. The year was 1937, and the place was London, England. As the world found itself being drawn closer to another world war, disarmament talks were taking place. King George the VI was preparing to deliver a radio address to the British subjects when suddenly there was a break in the electrical circuit. The wires snapped in two, the loose ends dangling not far from the microphone. This was not good. Everyone in the building was in a panic; after all, the king was ready to address the people. How was his message to reach them over the airwaves if the circuit was broken?

There was a humble workman there in the building – obviously a person whose socio-economic status was lower than that of the statesmen that were present and the members of the king's entourage. But as everyone rushed around in a frenzy, trying to figure out whose fault it was that this happened, this workman reached out and took the dangling wires in his hands. With one end in his right hand and one in his left, he bridged the gap in the circuit. The current flowed through his body, and he actually became for a time a part of the circuit. He did not create the power by which the king's message was transmitted; he merely closed the circuit so that the power could flow through it. But through the service of this very ordinary soul, the king's message reached the ears of the hundreds of thousands who were gathered by their radios to listen to his address. It was through this man that the will of the king was done.

In our Old Testament reading, we hear the story of the anointing of David as the Lord's chosen King of Israel. David was the youngest of Jesse's sons, and he began his life very humbly as a shepherd. Undoubtedly Samuel was surprised that the Lord would choose such a young boy, but David later became a fierce warrior, and his reign as king for 40 years was

considered flawless. He was, however, shall we say, less than virtuous in his personal life, and he suffered a great amount of strife throughout the years. Nevertheless, as the Lord told Samuel when he sent his Spirit upon David, “The Lord sees not as man sees; the Lord looks on the heart.” Flawed as he was, David became God’s instrument – a part of the circuit. And it was, of course, through the lineage of this beleaguered king that the Messiah would come.

In our Gospel reading today, we hear the story of the blind beggar. The Disciples are focused on the outward appearance of the man and are trying to figure out whose fault it was that he was born blind, not unlike the British subjects fretting about who or what caused the break in the circuit. But Jesus does not focus on what may have occurred in the past; rather, he chooses to reveal the glory of God through the blind man. Through the giving of sight to this man, Christ closes the circuit, if you will. His healing power and grace flow to the blind man as he anoints the man’s eyes, and the man is transformed. Through his healing and testimony, the man in turn becomes the conduit through which the glory of Christ is revealed to others, just as the British workman was the conduit through which the king’s message reached the people. Rather than looking at faults and weaknesses of the past, Jesus seeks to build the kingdom of God by allowing his grace and power to flow through us in order that others may receive them as well.

Well, once an electrical circuit is closed and current flows through it, something happens. In the case of the radio microphone that day in London, King George’s address was broadcast over the airwaves. And in the case of a lamp, the light bulb goes on. In Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, he tells his readers, “Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” He doesn’t say that you were “in” darkness and are now “in” the light, he says you were darkness and now you are light. In our baptism, each of us is sealed by the Holy Spirit and is marked as Christ’s own. We have the light of Christ within us from that time forward, and as we live joyfully and openly in that light, we ourselves radiate the light that we have become. For it is only through us that Christ’s glory can be shared with others.

As Jesus completed his earthly ministry, he prepared his disciples to carry on that ministry in the world. For if the power and love of God made manifest in the person of Jesus were to remain after his death – after the circuit was broken – it could only happen if there was a conduit for that love – if there were willing servants there to grasp the wires so that the circuit would be closed and the power of Christ would flow through them to the world. We are all called to serve one another in the name of Christ, and we are also called to be served by others in his name. For this service to one another is the expression of Christ’s love for the world. And let us not forget how far our Lord lowered himself to serve each of us by taking in his hands not the ends of electrical wires, but rather nails, in order that the circuit of God’s power and love for the world might never be broken. It is through our service to one another that our lives are transformed.

Henri Nouwen, one of the twentieth century’s greatest spiritual writers, described the movement of God’s goodness in our lives and the inner transformation that takes place in this way: “The new emerging self in Christ, shaped by the gospel and sculpted by the Spirit, is a self that echoes the heartbeat of Christ. And embedded in this echo is a heart that seeks to serve.” If you were here on Ash Wednesday, you may recall these words that were read from the Prophet Joel: “Rend your hearts, and not your garments.” God looks on the heart. What does he see on your heart? In what ways is he calling you to become a conduit for his love through service to

others? The common British workman offered himself in service by closing the electrical circuit in order that the King's message could be broadcast to the British population. He was not special, and we don't have to be special, either. But our hearts must be open and our hands must be ready in order to keep the circuit closed.

May each of us be willing to step forward and offer ourselves as the conduit through which God's never-ending love for the world may continue to flow. I think that the prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi is a very powerful reminder of exactly what we are – God's instruments. I would like to close with this prayer. I know you have heard it many times, but I want to share it with you again. Let us pray:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.