

Psalm 23
1 Samuel 16:1-13
John 9:1-12

“SEE IT ALL”

Please turn your calendar back to the 1600's
... and meet Margaret Fell.

Margaret Fell was moved to tears by the children living on the streets of London. Waifs, orphans, boys and girls living under bridges, in deserted buildings, scrounging for food, begging on the streets.

She saw children wrestled to the ground and dragged off by the police. And jailed. She saw them scurry for cover -- and safety. She heard their cries as some took refuge in the sewers -- there, many drowned.

Disgusted by the pitiful plight of the children, and wanting to provide relief, she begged her husband, who was an influential judge and a member of parliament, to let her go into the prisons and care for these suffering ... these lost children.

He said “NO” “Impossible.” “That’s no place for a woman.” But Margaret Fell was a determined woman. Eventually he relented, and granted her access to one of the prisons. It was a dungeon, really. Dark and wet ...rats scurried, squalor. Many of the children were sick unto death.

For quite some time Margaret revisited that prison. She took food. Bandages. Medicines. Blankets. Fresh water. And she held the children in her arms.

And she was outraged! She railed at her husband - and to other influential people. But to no avail. “That’s simply the way things are, they said. “There are some ways that can’t be changed! They’re too entrenched.

Then she went to her pastor. “How can God let this happen to the children?” she demanded. “If God is God ... if God is loving. If God is all-powerful ----

--- WHY DOESN'T GOD DO SOMETHING,” SHE DEMANDED.

Her pastor, whose name was George Fox, replied, **“Margaret, God has done all that God is going to do -- GOD HAS LET YOU SEE THE CHILDREN.”**

Margaret Fell continued to make her prison visits -- feeding the children -- taking medicines -- holding the children. And arranging for their burial.

And above ground she began the slow, tedious work to improve the lives of the children ... to draft and promote laws which would protect the children and require that they be treated with justice and mercy.

“Margaret, God has done what God is going to do -- GOD HAS LET YOU SEE THE CHILDREN.”

In some ways, you of Head of Christiana stand in the long line of people like Margaret Fell.

- You care about children and their families. You teach and you support teachers and schools. You nurse and encourage those who nurse and heal. -- You have seen the children.
- You volunteer and read to children and you listen to children. You have seen the children.

AND FURTHER --

- You give time and money for Meeting Ground, and Deep Roots. The Empowerment Center, Newark Welfare Committee and One Great Hour of Sharing. You have seen the Homeless/many of them children.

- You volunteer and you are employed at hospitals and nursing homes ...and with hospice... You take blood pressures and do depression screenings. You have seen the sick/many of them children.
- You volunteer, and prepare and serve meals with Hope Dining Room and Elkton Community kitchen. You collect food for the Food Bank and shop for those going through tough times. You gather candies, cookies and treats for lonely seamen. You have seen the hungry of body and lonely of soul/and many of them are children.
- You counsel and you support those who counsel people who have lost their way and who struggle with illnesses of the mind. You listen to the anguished. To the heartbroken. You have seen the broken/and many of them are children.

You have seen the children ...

Seen the homeless...

Seen the hungry ...

Seen the sick ... the lonely ...

You have seen the broken ...

And you see these people in your work -- in your visits -- walking in your neighborhoods -- playing on your streets -- hoped-for by your church.

And now ... WHAT?

Are you overwhelmed?! Exhausted?!

You're too old for this?

Or perhaps too young. Too inexperienced.

Or perhaps you are too experienced ...

so you've grown hardened.

Overcome, perhaps, by guilt.

Overcome, possibly, by noxious fumes of self-interest and fear.

But now, imagine, we are walking along with Jesus -- crowds have joined us --

This is the time we have all dreamed about --

... GROUPS OF PEOPLE ARE FOLLOWING JESUS –

And a man approaches ... A man blind from birth.

And Jesus' closest friends engage in a conversation ... a debate, really. (They must be Presbyterians. They want to figure this situation out ... examine, and see if this blind man is worthy. "Jesus ... Rabbi ...teacher ... tell us ... did this man sin or was it his parents sinned, that he was born blind?"

And Jesus brings them up short. "Neither sinned. LOOK. SEE GOD'S WORK REVEALED IN HIM.

"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."

Then ... Jesus spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes – ok, that was a little messy. But grace was captured in those moments. The touch ... the breath of God ... it was kind of like a baptism designed especially for this man born blind.

And now the next step was up to the blind man.

"Go wash in the pool of Siloam," Jesus instructs.

And he goes ... AND HE IS HEALED!

That's God's grace at its most remarkable.

Once I was blind, but now I see!

But wait a moment. Let's not miss this part of the story. How did the blind man get to the pool of Siloam? I can almost guarantee this. And It's born-out by those who are captured by Jesus' love. Embraced by Jesus's way. Who have been following Jesus.

Some one in the crowd moved up close to the blind man, and edged-out his elbow ..,and the man born blind recognized the elbow. I doubt if he knew to whom that elbow belonged but it was a gesture of friendship. A sign of hospitality. An arm offered by one of Head of Christiana ... and we cheered that person on.

- You have seen the children.
- You have seen the hungry.
- You have seen the homeless.
- You have seen the brokenhearted.

DO SOMETHING!

SAY SOMETHING!

CHANGE SOMETHING!

What is your priority?

And the vital point? You can't do everything. So make certain you are doing the all-important things.

Recognize and do that which will save a child –

Or that nurtures a family.

Or heals a friendship --

Or unites a neighborhood.

Even the world.

Or do we simply remain in maintenance mode?

A person told me a week or two ago -- "I want Head of Christiana to be here for my funeral. And I want you to preach the sermon." I was flattered. But then I had second thoughts. Better thoughts.

We can think that way with a church that's on maintenance mode. A church satisfied with survival.

Providing CPR, -- and wrapping on a few more bandages, while blood drains from this crucial part of the body of Christ.

And the central point? There is a wider world. A broader neighborhood. With deeper needs. People hurting ... and hoping ... **And we hold the treasure -- we hold the love -- the care in our hands so as to make all the difference in the world.**

And so we cannot simply pass by. Our minds stuck in how things used to be --

Our hearts enmeshed in precious memories.

Jesus seeks to wrench us away from “yesterday thinking” -- and places us squarely on the road for tomorrow’s opportunities.

Margaret Fell was an extraordinary woman. But she had an extraordinarily insightful pastor in George Fox.

Yes, George Fox on his faithful journey with Christ, gathered and articulated the theology and founded and led the Society of Friends -- the Quakers.

And after Margaret Fell’s husband died, she fell in love with and married George Fox.

Margaret -- you have seen the children.

That’s a powerful call to commitment. To action.

Women -- men -- youth of Head of Christiana --
You too have seen the children.

You have seen so much ...

Your lives are rich...

Overflowing with vital experiences

You have met and you work and worship with a magnificent array of people.

You have seen the children --

Now, with joy and hope --

PROVIDE FOR THEIR HEALING.

AND IN YOUR GOOD WORK, YOU WILL RECEIVE

POWER FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT,

AND YOU WILL BE HEALED AS WELL.