 What’s Your Point of View?

I have become acutely aware that our point of view- our place or our vantage point- often makes it difficult for us to see anyone else’s point of view.

Looking out the window of the manse where we live is very different upstairs vs. downstairs. The pictures taken give quite a different view of the mountain behind our house. What a difference one story can make!

This ol’ North Mountain is good at helping me see the rest of the world in a new way. The many ways I ‘see’ the mountain depend not only where I stand but the hour, the sun, the clouds and the weather in that moment. The photo just above was taken by me and my cell phone 15-20 minutes before the one to the right was taken by Tom and his much nicer digital camera. So many things that go into making a different perspective!

How does this translate into how we ‘see’ people we meet or our lives, our community, the world around us? This may depend not only on where we stand but on where we’ve been, who we are and our experiences in life.

In John 8 Jesus is in the Temple when the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman who has been caught in the act of adultery to Jesus. They wait to see what Jesus’ point of view is as they tell him the law of Moses commands stoning her. Their point from which they viewed this woman was very different than Jesus. While they stood there using this woman to bait Jesus, hoping to bring a charge against him; Jesus bent down and scribbled in the sand. How could they be so different? How could Jesus, scribes and Pharisees- all experts in the Law- look at sin and the law so differently?

The difference was their purpose! The scribes and Pharisees’ purpose was not seeking to bring a just punishment to the woman and the man caught in adultery as scripture prescribed but to use the woman as a pawn to catch Jesus in any variation from the law so they could accuse him.

Jesus’s purpose was to engage the lost and the sinner who had been banished from the community in order to find a way to restore them to wholeness. Jesus saw through their scheme and offered a more fitting way to bring the punishment for sin – only those with no sin should cast a stone. The scribes and Pharisees knew they had broken the law by not accusing the man and the woman, as the law prescribed. No one was innocent, except the man stooping to write in the dirt.

What is most important is not that we all have the same point of view but rather that we can look around our point to view the other with compassion and kindness, to see the person behind the view and try to love and understand them-even if we don’t like their point of view. Maybe we need to stoop down, to look at things from a different perspective as Jesus did. Jesus’ divinity did not preclude his compassion even in the face of the law, sin and sinners all around. Jesus stepped out of the accusers circle to get lower, lesser, to find a truthful alternative. Jesus, then could offer a way out of the power hungry punishment and bring relief and restoration in place of injustice and humiliation.

Unlike trying to get a good picture of the mountain where going higher gives a clearer view, when we walk with Jesus the way up or the clearer view, sometimes starts from a lower point of view. The higher way may be the lower, humbler way of searching for another approach to a problem. It’s the choice we are offered as we try and follow Jesus from his point of view.