

**KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
**SUNDAY, MAY 4, 2025**  
**SERMON: Seeing With Eyes Closed**  
**SCRIPTURE: ACTS 9:1-20 (NRSV)**  
**Rev. Christopher Eng**

**ACTS 9:1-20 N.R.S.V.**

**1** Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest **2** and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. **3** Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. **4** He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" **5** He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. **6** But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." **7** The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. **8** Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. **9** For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

**10** Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." **11** The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, **12** and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." **13** But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; **14** and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." **15** But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; **16** I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." **17** So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." **18** And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, **19** and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, **20** and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

**Sermon: Seeing With Eyes Closed**

**Introduction:** I remember meeting Aisha who was 7 and Adam who was 5 on November 18, 2023 here in the sanctuary. When Pastor Irene invited me to preach today, she shared an important decision with me. Both of her children are competing in an all day Karate tournament and she wanted to attend! It is important for a pastor to take time off on a Sunday because their child or children are involved in something like this. I wonder how she came to this realization.

Today's passage from Acts 9 about Saul's conversion is like coming to this realization of what is important. Every morning, I meditate by closing my eyes and focusing on my breathing. Usually I am trying to empty my mind and "let go" of thoughts that distract. But sometimes I begin to see even with my eyes closed that there is something that is affecting me in a way that is not good. God will speak to us through Saul's experiences that led him to become the Apostle Paul. He became aware of his actions that had consequences.

Saul had been bringing letters about Christians to synagogues resulting in some being stoned to death such as Stephen, the first martyr. As we read the Scriptures, he is arriving at Damascus when light from heaven flashed around him. It blinded him as he fell to the ground. He heard the voice of the Lord saying "Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asks, "Who are you Lord?" And the reply came, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Saul did not realize what he had been doing. Then he had a vision where the Lord gave him instructions. Most of us know the story of how Ananias lay hands on Saul so he regained his sight. It amazes me that Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit and was baptized!" I was also amazed at the Easter Sunday worship here at KCC! Getting back to Saul, he then entered the synagogue and proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God! A 180 degree turn.

2. There was a time when I took a daily walk. When Aiko, our Shiba Inu was alive, I would take her to the Westloch Park where we live. After she died, I would still take my daily walk but the sadness overcame me when I remembered how much joy she brought into my life. Then I stopped. For years, my wife has been trying to get me to walk because of its health benefits. She wakes up early to walk for an hour every day that she can, some days walking with a friend in other places. One day, as I was meditating, my eyes closed, breathing in and out, suddenly I began to see with my mind. Friends, some who did monthly hikes together, were going to walk to the Natural Bird Reserve in the park where we live. It's just a few miles but for the first time, all my excuses melted away and I said that I'd go. Wednesday April 16 was the hike that started me on a daily habit, walking an hour around the park for 16 days so far.

3. How does this relate to you? There is something that you are doing or not doing. Perhaps there is someone who has tried to talk to you about some issue but you don't want to listen and you quickly dismiss it. But one day you may try meditation by finding a quiet place to sit, closing your eyes, and focusing on your breathing. Although your eyes are closed, you can see with your mind or perhaps your heart that there is something you've been avoiding. Like Saul, you have not been aware of how your behavior is affecting others, even if it's just one person. But as you pray for God to reveal to you what you've been avoiding, you begin to focus on listening to what someone has been trying to tell you. Then a change comes over you as you begin to do something that begins a transformation. You don't realize it right away but you are undergoing a conversion experience. All of this can take a day, a week, a month or longer.

**Conclusion.** This idea of "Seeing with Eyes Closed" started with Pastor Irene realizing she needed to spend time with her son and daughter today. It reminded me of how Sundays were always so busy and church was my first priority. But there were times when I took Sunday off to be with my family, especially my children when they had sporting events. I look back to 2018, convinced that I would never do well as an interim pastor. Yet, Dean Wakuzawa and Susan Morita kept asking me if I would come to Kailua Christian Church and be their interim. At the time I was a Hospice Hawaii chaplain. Well, God spoke to me in a dream while I was asleep. I had fears and anxieties about being an interim pastor but I had to have faith and trust in the Lord. And so I said yes! It's so difficult to make a change in our lives. Sometimes, something so out of the ordinary has to happen. It did for Saul who was "blinded by the light from heaven" but gradually he changed and became Paul.