

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

15th March 2026

[John 9:1-41, at end of this document]

It is Jesus' recognition of the man's need that leads to a recovery of sight both physical and spiritual. Both are important in the story, because it is the man's first experience of healing, an experience he cannot deny, which opens him to the second healing of faith. He stands by his experience, no matter what the pressure.

Thought for the day

How we respond to pressure can vary very much from person to person. In John's Gospel, there are two related stories of people being healed, one in chapter 5 and the other in chapter 9, today's reading. The man at the pool eventually betrays Jesus. The man born blind resists pressure and even grows on the strength of it. Part of his energy comes from his experience—no matter what others may say about Jesus, he himself once was blind and now he sees! His courageous attachment to what he knows from his personal encounter with Jesus leads eventually to a full act of faith.

Prayer

Faithful God, you call us to be faithful even in times of trial. Teach us to embrace the challenge of faith today, that we may have the courage to grow and give courage to others by our witness.

KIERAN O'MAHONY OSA - www.tarsus.ie

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

A long story like the one we have today provides many different points of entry for prayer. Read the story and stay with what resonates with you. Some possible points of entry are:

1. The blind man was healed. Can you recall occasions when some blindness of yours was taken away and you could see in a new way? What was that experience like for you.
2. The Pharisees claimed to be the ones who could see, who knew where God was to be found, when in fact they were blind. It was the man born blind who showed himself open to see the hand of God at work in what happened. There can be some of each in us. What has helped you to be open to seeing the hand of God at work in your life? Who have been the Jesus people who have led you to this point?
3. The Pharisees seem to have had a collective blindness that blocked them from seeing what God was doing in Jesus. Perhaps in today's world you can see examples of collective blindness when people want to avoid an awkward truth, e.g. about the damage being done to our planet by human activity.
4. There are many characters in the story: Jesus, the blind beggar, the disciples, the neighbours, the blind man's parents, and the Pharisees. Put yourself in the position of each one and see what you learn from identifying with them.

JOHN BYRNE OSA - Intercom

In the first part of the story we see that the disciples are not really interested in helping the man born blind, they are more concerned with solving the riddle of whose fault it is that he is blind in the first place. Is it divine retribution? Jesus is clear that no one is to blame.

One really interesting thing to notice in the story is how the man's vision increases as the story unfolds. It's not only his physical sight that returns, but spiritually he begins to **see** more and more clearly. In contrast to this clarity the opposite is happening for the religious leaders.

Recall a moment when you gained a greater clarity, greater 'seeing' or awareness. What insights did you receive? What grace was revealed to you?

Jesus is the role model responding to the blind man with compassion, healing and love. He is the light which guides to greater awareness. What situations in your own life are in need to a similar response? Speak to the Lord about them now.

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT - Go Deeper

This story tells us much about how the evangelist saw the work of Jesus. As with the Samaritan woman someone who is considered an outcast takes their place among the community of believers. The story also relies heavily on symbolism; this time blindness and sight are contrasted with darkness and light. The images are used to make us think about what it means to come to faith. We are presented with the difference between the blind man who gradually comes to acknowledge who Jesus is and the Pharisees who become progressively more hard-hearted and are shown to be the only really blind people in the story.

The openness of the man born blind, his growing conviction about Jesus and the fact that he suffers for it are all pointers to what is needed in the person who wants to believe. The fact that he is anointed and washed are symbols of baptism and the new life it offers, but Jesus' opponents cannot see this and are unable to move beyond a purely legalistic interpretation of the Law of Moses that would forbid what Jesus has done.

It is probably also true to say that the blind man's parents represent those who have some insight into the truth but are afraid to move forward because of the challenges it will pose.

SEAN GOAN - Let the Reader Understand

Jesus works on the eyes of the poor blind man with mud and saliva to pour into him his life. The cure is not automatic. The blind man too has to collaborate. He does what Jesus tells him to do: he washes his eyes, cleans them and begins to see. When the people ask him who cured him he does not know what to answer. It was a man called Jesus. He cannot say any more. Neither does he know where he is. He only knows that thanks to this man he can now live life in a completely new way. This is what's important.

The Pharisees get furious and expel him from the religious community. The reaction of Jesus is touching. When he learns that they have thrown the man out, he goes to look for him. That's the way Jesus is. We must never forget the one who comes to seek out men and women who feel they have been thrown out of religion. Jesus does not abandon those who seek and love him even though they have been excluded from their religious community.

It is a brief exchange: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The man is willing to believe. In his heart he is a believer, but he doesn't know anything more. "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said "You have seen him; in fact he is the one speaking with you." According to the evangelist this event took place in Jerusalem about the year 30 and continues to take place among us in the twenty-first century.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA - Following in the Footsteps of Jesus

John has woven three stories into one, each interacting with the others and shedding light on them like the different colours in a painting. In your meditation follow up one story at a time, the one that happens to touch you right now.

The story of **the man born blind** who gradually comes to the point where he worships Jesus (verse 38). It is the long, often painful, journey of a person who is called to see life in a new way and as a result makes a new commitment. You will notice (and recognize from your own experience) how he sees more and more clearly at every stage that this is a call from God which he can trust. He also experiences more and more opposition and rejection, until the moment when he is lost, the same moment when he is found by Jesus.

The story of the **Pharisees** (called "the Jews" in the last part of the passage) make an opposite journey, becoming more and more blind. Trace the stages of their journey: coming to the pathetic climax in verse 40. Recognize from your experience, and with great humility, how religious people can become complacent that they know God's will, and in the process become more and more intolerant and violent towards those who oppose them. Notice at every stage the contrast between them and the man born blind.

The story of **Jesus** is the leader who has "come into this world" to accompany the humble on their journey to sight and, on the other hand, to expose the blindness of the arrogant. Discover in him the ideal for all in authority, and also for the church in its relationship with the wider community. His own humble trust in the Father and his compassion are beautifully expressed in verses 1 to 5, his clarity of purpose in verses 39 to 41. Who does he remind you of?.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels

Gospel John 9:1-41

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?' 'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered 'he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

'As long as the day lasts I must carry out the work of the one who sent me; the night will soon be here when no one can work.

As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.'

Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man, and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (a name that means 'sent'). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored.

His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'Yes, it is the same one.' Others said, 'No, he only looks like him.' The man himself said, 'I am the man.' So they said to him, 'Then how do your eyes come to be open?' 'The man called Jesus' he answered 'made a paste, daubed my eyes with it and said to me, "Go and wash at Siloam"; so I went, and when I washed I could see.' They asked, 'Where is he?' 'I don't know' he answered.

They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been a sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the sabbath.' Others said, 'How could a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' 'He is a prophet' replied the man. However, the Jews would not believe that the man had been blind and had gained his sight, without first sending for his parents and asking them, 'Is this man really your son who you say was born blind? If so, how is it that he is now able to see?' His parents answered, 'We know he is our son and we know he was born blind, but we do not know how it is that he can see now, or who opened his eyes. He is old enough: let him speak for himself.' His parents spoke like this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to expel from the synagogue anyone who should acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. This was why his parents said, 'He is old enough; ask him.'

So the Jews again sent for the man and said to him, 'Give glory to God! For our part, we know that this man is a sinner.' The man answered, 'I don't know if he is a sinner; I only know that I was blind and now I can see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' He replied, 'I have told you once and you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it all again? Do you want to become his disciples too?' At this they hurled abuse at him: 'You can be his disciple,' they said 'we are disciples of Moses: we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' The man replied, 'Now here is an astonishing thing! He has opened my eyes, and you don't know where he comes from! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to men who are devout and do his will. Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of a man who was born blind; if this man were not from God, he couldn't do a thing.' 'Are you trying to teach us,' they replied 'and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!' And they drove him away.

Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir,' the man replied 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You are looking at him; he is speaking to you.' The man said, 'Lord, I believe', and worshipped him.

Jesus said: 'It is for judgement that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight turn blind.'

Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him, 'We are not blind, surely?' Jesus replied:

'Blind? If you were,
you would not be guilty,
but since you say, "We see,"
your guilt remains.'