

Sunday Message

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year A • 19 March 2023 • Psalter Week 4



SEEING OUR BLIND SPOTS

JOHN 9:1-41

Most of us are blessed with the gift of sight. We can see each other. We can see and treasure our loved ones. We can go to the movies and watch a film. We can feast our eyes on a beautiful sunset or observe our team's goal-scoring feats. The sharp-eyed amongst us will notice how nature is beginning to reawaken after its long winter sleep.

We can see, but there is a difference between being able to see and not seeing as we should. We can see but still not fully see at all. We can have 20/20 vision and still be blind.

Like the Pharisees in today's Gospel. They had the gift of sight, they could physically see, but they couldn't see what was really important. They couldn't see who Jesus really was. They couldn't see what was before their eyes. They suffered from spiritual blindness.

They are the polar opposites of the hero of today's Gospel – the man born blind. This poor man lived in a world of darkness but wasn't spiritually blind. When he encountered Jesus, when Jesus touched him, he could see who Jesus really was. He recognised Jesus as his Messiah and Lord.

So the man who was blind was the one who could see, whereas the Pharisees who could see were the ones who were blind. They didn't recognise Jesus. They refused to see him as their Messiah and Lord. They failed to see the light.

That's the beautiful irony of today's Gospel. And that's the challenge it offers us – to spot our blind spots and see where or how we might be blind. ■

REFLECT

Most of us can see, but we all have blind spots – faults, failings – we may not be aware of or to which we may deliberately turn a blind eye. Maybe there are family members or colleagues we ignore or are not attentive to. Perhaps it's how we see those who are different from us – people who are LGBT+ or of another race, nationality, or background. Maybe our relationship with God is not as it should be.

Perhaps we have got sucked into some form of addiction that we don't want to admit. Maybe we're stuck in a rut, just drifting along, not pulling our weight at home, work, or school. Perhaps we are so closed in on ourselves that we see only our needs, and we fail to see the needs of others. Maybe all those selfies that we take, and the modern obsession with image, mean that when we look in the mirror, we see only what we don't like about ourselves and fail to see the beauty in us and the extraordinary gifts and qualities that we possess.

PRAY

To say you are Christian today is to risk being ridiculed or dismissed as deluded. We can feel like we are on trial, just like the blind man must have felt in today's Gospel. Pray for yourself and Christians everywhere for the strength to witness to the faith, whatever the cost.

LEARN

A Christian is someone who leads others to Jesus

A Christian sees with the eyes of faith

Jesus is the light of the world

SAY

"Lord, I thank you for the gift of faith. Help me to see as you see. Amen."

DO

Easter is drawing close, and now is an excellent time to make an examination of conscience. What are your blind spots? What do you need to change to be a better Christian?



There are so many forms of blindness and ways we can be blind.

Lent offers an opportunity to put this right. It is a time when we are invited to become aware of our blind spots, what we might need to improve or attend to. Look for your blind spots. Look at your life's shape now - your values, priorities, relationships, and attitudes. Ask the Lord to heal you, as he healed the man born blind. And then change what needs changing so you will have perfect 20/20 spiritual vision. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her.
Be joyful, all who were in mourning;
exult and be satisfied at her consoling
breast.

COLLECT

O God, who through your Word
reconcile the human race to yourself in a
wonderful way,
grant, we pray,
that with prompt devotion and eager faith
the Christian people may hasten
toward the solemn celebrations to come.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING 1 Samuel 16:1. 6-7. 10-13

A reading from the first book of Samuel.
The Lord said to Samuel: "Fill your horn
with oil and go. I am sending you to
Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen
myself a king among his sons." When
Samuel arrived, he caught sight of Eliab
and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed
one stands there before him," but the
Lord said to Samuel, "Take no notice of
his appearance or his height for I have
rejected him; God does not see as man
sees; man looks at appearances but the
Lord looks at the heart." Jesse presented
his seven sons to Samuel, but Samuel
said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen
these." He then answered, "Are these all
the sons you have?" He answered, "There
is still one left, the youngest; he is out
looking after the sheep." Then Samuel
said to Jesse, "Send for him; we will not
sit down to eat until he comes." Jesse had
him sent for, a boy of fresh complexion,
with fine eyes and pleasant bearing. The
Lord said, "Come, anoint him, for this is
the one." At this, Samuel took the horn of
oil and anointed him where he stood with
his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord
seized on David and stayed with him from
that day on.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 22

Response:

**The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.**

- The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit. (R.)
- He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your
staff;
with these you give me comfort. (R.)

3. You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. (R.)

4. Surely goodness and kindness shall
follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. (R.)

SECOND READING Ephesians 5:8-14

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians.

You were darkness once, but now you
are light in the Lord; be like children of
light, for the effects of the light are seen
in complete goodness and right living and
truth. Try to discover what the Lord wants
of you, having nothing to do with the futile
works of darkness but exposing them by
contrast. The things which are done in
secret are things that people are ashamed
even to speak of; but anything exposed by
the light will be illuminated and anything
illuminated turns into light. That is why it
is said:

Wake up from your sleep,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word
of God!**

**I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
anyone who follows me will have the
light of life.**

**Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word
of God!**

GOSPEL

John 9:1.6-9.13-17.34-38

(a longer version may be read: John 9:1-41)
A reading from the holy Gospel according
to John.

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who
had been blind from birth. 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."

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.

"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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our
Lord,**

(all bow during the next two lines)
**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the
dead;**

**he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the
living
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We place before you with joy these
offerings,
which bring eternal remedy, O Lord,
praying that we may both faithfully revere
them
and present them to you, as is fitting,
for the salvation of all the world.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**The Lord anointed my eyes: I went,
I washed,
I saw and I believed in God.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, who enlighten everyone who
comes into this world,
illuminate our hearts, we pray,
with the splendour of your grace,
that we may always ponder
what is worthy and pleasing to your
majesty
and love you in all sincerity.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

