

# 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. ■

### 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?



### 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.

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.**

1. 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.)
2. 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.**

