

March 15, 2026  
Fourth Sunday in Lent

“Filling Our Vision”

John 9:1-41

As baptized Christians, what do we see? How do we see? What do we allow to fill our vision?

This long reading about Jesus encountering this man born blind is one of my very favorites in the four Gospels, mostly because this guy born blind has some real pluck. He not only has a sense of humor, but he is bold, and solid in his conviction.

He has been blind all of his life. This is significant. Someone who was blind due to disease or injury, well, they might heal on their own. Born blind is blind; no going back to sight, no experience with sight. So when this guy receives his sight, he knows that a divine miracle, a work of God, has taken place. This is what the Pharisees wish to deny.

It's rather weird and kind of tragic that the first things this guy witnesses with his eyes in the hours after the healing is not the beauty of the creation or the joy of celebration, it is the ugliness and evil of men trying to deny what God has done.

First his neighbors are hesitant to believe the miracle, even questioning if this guy is who he is. They don't accept it with joy. They don't accept it with faith. They question it and send for the Pharisees. The Pharisees have no joy at the wondrous healing. They're more concerned that it took place on the Sabbath and want to use that as a club to attack Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah who has done this divine act. The first things this guy sees is the rejection of the one who healed him.

The Pharisees bring his parents into the fray, and when they see the opposition against their son, they pretty much throw him under the bus. The Pharisees threaten him and really, his response is just common-sense theology: *“Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”* He knows the truth and he does not back down from it. He gladly suffers the consequences of his faith in being cast out of the synagogue, which is a pretty big deal in first-century Israel.

Soon after, the ultimate truth of the situation is made clear to him: *“Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ He answered, ‘And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.’ He said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him.”* This guy responds in worshipful faith in Jesus Christ the Lord, the Son of God who has cured his blindness.

We once were lost and blind in our sins, but we are here because God, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, has given us sight to behold Christ crucified and risen as our Savior and King. Looking at this bold and brash fellow's attitude, I think it is good to ask ourselves these questions: As baptized Christians, what do we see? How do we see? What do we allow to fill our vision?

Weirdly enough, I think a lot of folks, even many who would call themselves Christians, react to Christ in the same manner people reacted to the healed man born blind in the story.

Like the community, the Word of the Gospel is seen by many as all mystery, something that can't be understood and therefore, not truly accepted. Not to say they don't see the cross and the empty tomb, but they just don't see how it has any real bearing on them. "Jesus died to forgive our sins" may be understood, but the "follow me" part, not so much. The Word says reacting to that means selflessness, humility, unconditional love and forgiveness, etc. You know, bearing a cross. But to the self-centered sinful nature all that is passed off as confusing and unable to be what Jesus really asks of His followers. So there is the big question mark put on top of Christ, not denying Him, but not fully trusting in Him either. They may see themselves receiving His good gifts, sure, be not so much following in His example or where He leads.

Others see Jesus as the Pharisees did—the opposition. I don't mean as in opposed to the Christian faith, but more so to what Jesus teaches and the life to which He calls us. "Love your enemies?" Ridiculous. Can't be right. "Forgive always and endlessly?" Certainly not. Some people don't deserve it. "Sacrifice treasure, talent or time?" No way. The divine work of Christ has been made plain, but the worldly beliefs of my rights and control over my life and possessions, my knowing how things are, that stands, even though it's opposed to Christ.

And then there are the parents. They know a divine miracle has taken place, but they perceive a threat, so they immediately throw the truth under the bus. Folks know the ultimate work of God—Christ crucified and risen—but when that means conflict with the world? Folks duck, dodge and run away, throwing their Christian witness under the bus.

Why do these and other such faithlessness happen among the supposed faithful? We see the world. We see the world as the commanding reality regulating what moves we make. The world fills our vision until there is little or no space for Jesus. Maybe we allow Him to reign for an hour or so on Sundays and during daily prayers. But the rest of the time, the world is what fills our vision, and when that happens it's a short step to the world becoming that in which we fear, love and trust.

What is the Gospel we know to be true? Jesus Christ has done a divine work upon us! It stems from the cross and empty tomb 2000 years ago, but He has reached into our lives and opened our eyes to salvation! We know that forgives my personal sin, myself, my soul. Jesus shines the light in the dark world to reveal the way of salvation to me, one formerly born blind! The Holy Spirit does this, gifting us the eyes of saving faith.

We need to keep our eyes open to this reality all the time, every day, or at least always be striving to do so. The world is going to take center stage sometimes; it happens. We close our eyes to Christ and trip in the darkness of sin. That's bad, but we open our eyes and repent and there is Christ, right in front of us, forgiving us; formally here in absolution, the Supper, remembrance of baptism, but always simply recognizing the fulfilled promise that is His cross.

What we cannot do is get comfortable living life with those eyes closed. That is like becoming all those people who in different ways were denying the fact that the divine healing of the blind guy by Jesus was a thing. They were living in their confusion, their self-righteousness and power trips, their fear, in other words in the thrall of the world, when the divine was at work in their presence!

When we see Christ at work in us, at work for our good and that of those around us, it removes confusion, fear, and the love of self and world. Like the formerly blind guy, we know that Christ is Lord of all, that He has healed us, forgiven us, and our life is His forever.

Amen.