

## LENT FOUR, YEAR A, MARCH 15, 2026

Our Gospel for this fourth week of Lent is about costly seeing. Real sight is never cheap as it unsettles us, exposes us, and asks something of us. In John's Gospel, Jesus encounters a man who has been blind since birth. Jesus kneels in the dust, makes mud, places it on the man's eyes, and sends him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. When the man washes, he sees.

But John's Gospel is not really interested in the miracle itself because the miracle itself takes only a moment. The real story begins after the man can see, because when sight appears, the blindness of everyone else is exposed.

Before the healing even happens, the disciples reveal their assumptions. They ask Jesus, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" It sounds like a theological question, but it is really about blame. If suffering can be blamed on the sufferer, then the rest of us are absolved.

Jesus rejects that premise entirely. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned." His blindness is not divine punishment. God is not in the business of assigning illness as moral verdicts.

And with that single sentence, Jesus cracks open a dangerous belief—the belief that suffering must somehow be deserved. Because once that illusion collapses, we must face something far more unsettling: the world is not arranged to protect the comfortable. Rather the systems we build can and do wound people and the majority of the time much of the suffering we see is the result of human decisions, human systems, and human indifference.

Whenever we tell ourselves that the poor deserve their poverty because they don't know how to work hard enough or that the sick deserve their illness because they didn't take care of themselves or that the oppressed must somehow be responsible for their suffering, we are not practicing theology. We are protecting our comfort.

The disciples want a tidy universe where goodness is rewarded and suffering is someone's fault. They want a universe where the rules make sense and the righteous stay safe. But Jesus shatters that illusion.

Then something even more disturbing happens. The man is healed. He can see. But not one person celebrates. His neighbors doubt him. The authorities interrogate him. Even his parents distance themselves from him out of fear of the religious authorities.

The people who knew him no longer recognize him because they never really saw him in the first place. To them he was not a man. He was blindness. And once a person is reduced to a condition, it becomes easy to ignore their suffering and debate their worth. Jesus restores sight not only to the man's eyes but tries to force the community to see the human being they had erased. And they refuse.

Because the miracle is disruptive. If the man's blindness was not punishment, then their explanations collapse. If suffering is not always deserved, no one cannot distance themselves from it. And if God heals outside their rules, then God is not under their control.

So, they do what institutions often do when confronted with uncomfortable truth: they question the witness to show he as a liar in order to protect the system, and eventually drive the healed man out of the community.

This is not just a religious conflict. It is about power and control—about who gets to define how the world works. The authorities insist they can see clearly. They choose certainty over compassion and order over truth. They choose to stand on the hard ground of their beliefs and defend the rules and their system because defending their certainty is far more important than believing in God who upends all of that. But in doing so, they miss the presence of God standing right in front of them.

And this is where the Gospel becomes prophetic for our own time. The most dangerous blindness in the world is not the inability to see—it is the refusal to see. We live in a time when entire movements are built on the insistence that we are right. We are right politically, morally, theologically, nationally and right with certainty and therefore anyone who challenges us must be dangerous, dishonest or expendable.

That kind of ideological certainty makes us suspicious and convinced we alone see everything clearly and when we do that people disappear. The poor become statistics. Migrants become a threat. The sick become burdens. The vulnerable become problems to manage rather than neighbors to love. We begin to see categories instead of human beings.

Like the blind man before his healing, they become conditions instead of people—problems instead of neighbors. And when people become abstractions, it becomes very easy to dismiss them, to blame them, to debate their worth, ignore their suffering, easy to step over them and easy to exclude them. You know the saying out of sight, out of mind.

The tragedy in John's story is not that one man was blind. The tragedy is that an entire religious system preferred blindness to transformation. Because transformation is costly. It means admitting we were wrong. It means letting go of explanations that protect us. It means seeing the world as God sees it.

Ironically, the only one who truly sees is the man who began blind. And the more clearly he sees, the more dangerous he becomes. He simply tells the truth: "I was blind, and now I see." He refuses to deny what happened. He refuses to pretend that God has not acted. So what do the authorities do? For that truth he is thrown out.

Throughout history, this is often what happens to people who see clearly. Prophets are expelled. Truth tellers are silenced. Those who disrupt comfortable lies are pushed outside the gate. But notice what happens next, The Gospel tells us something beautiful. When the man is cast out, Jesus goes and finds him. The community rejects him, but Jesus receives him. And in that moment the man sees most clearly of all. He falls before Jesus and says, "Lord, I believe." The one who was blind now sees. And those who insisted they could see remain in darkness.

Perhaps this is what Lent is meant to do—loosen our certainty and crack open the ground where we are sure we are right. Lent invites us to admit that we too are blind in ways we cannot yet see. And that is not failure. It is the beginning of sight.

The good news is this: Jesus still kneels in the dust. Jesus still touches the places where we cannot see. Jesus still sends us toward waters where our sight may be restored to see the invisible people and the injustices that we have put upon them. And when the mud is washed away and the light floods in, the question will remain: Will we celebrate what we see, or defend the blindness that once made us feel safe?

The ground where we are always right will never grow flowers. But the ground broken open by truth, compassion, and repentance becomes fertile. And in that soil, the kingdom of God begins to grow. Amen.