



## Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 15, 2026

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene  
Ernest Warner

1 Samuel 16:1-13    Ephesians 5: 8-14    Psalm 23    John 9:1-41

Proverbs tells us, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Grant us vision, Lord, that we may see each other more clearly and follow more closely the path that you have left for us. Amen.

"Now I see!" How many times have we said this to ourselves--when either in a discussion with someone else, or studying matters that might otherwise bewilder us? A revelation breaks through, and we can say to ourselves, now, I see. It provides us with an opening into a world of understanding formerly hidden from us, by our own lack of sight. We can ask ourselves, "Why do we have this lack of sight?" Might it be like the man who was born blind, that God's works might be revealed in us, through our opening to possibilities that we've previously denied, by entering deeper into relationships with each other, through understandings that previously eluded us? Now I see.

In today's gospel, Jesus and his disciples come upon a man born blind. The premise that the man was born blind plays a key part in the story's meaning. The disciples ask Jesus, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" It was believed in those times that such an affliction was a judgment of God against you or your parents. The story of Job illustrates this. Could it be that this belief is itself a form of blindness? Jesus seems to point to that when he says, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." How might this speak to us about people who are afflicted in our own midst? Are they afflicted because of their sins, or are they afflicted so that God's work can be manifest through us, in acts of compassion, healing, and mercy?

Jesus makes mud and puts it on the blind man's eyes, telling him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. Let's look at this from the "viewpoint" of the blind man — he really doesn't know Jesus; he's blind, yet here he is trusting a stranger to put mud on his face, and then follows his directions to go and wash in the pool. He seems willing to do anything that might help him see. Can we be this open? The blind man washes his eyes; now he can see. I have to imagine that this is a bit unsettling to him — he used to make a living by begging, and he is used to moving about in a world where he is blind; his senses were adapted to that world. Now he can see, and he has to get adjusted to a new way of being in the world. This can be like a period of adjustment we might encounter when we are opened up to a new way of seeing the world, and the people around us.

The blind man is taken to the Pharisees. The exchanges with the Pharisees are the longest part of the gospel story; there must be something here for us. The Pharisees question the blind man about what happened. The blind man tells them someone put mud on his eyes, he went and washed, and now he sees. We don't know if the Pharisees knew it was Jesus, but maybe they suspected. They tell the blind man that whoever it was did not observe the Sabbath, and that person has to be a sinner. Yet some of them wonder how could a sinner perform such signs? They asked the blind man, "What do you say about him?" The blind man tells them that he must be a prophet. The Pharisees are divided between the Sabbath law and an act of mercy.

The Pharisees call his parents to verify their son's story. His parents are probably a little worried because the Pharisees can put them out of the synagogue, which would disrupt their place in the community and their religious practice. They have to tread lightly as the Pharisees, themselves, are divided on the matter. His parents tell the Pharisees that yes, he was born blind, and that they do not know how he has come to see. They say he is of age; ask him. This is only reasonable because the parents do not know what happened.

The Pharisees recall the blind man, and it seems that some want to discredit or downplay whoever helped him. They tell him to give glory to God, for we know that this man is a sinner. The blind man tells them, I do not know whether he is a sinner, the one thing I do know is I was blind, and now I see. They ask him what happened, how did he open your eyes? The blind man gets a little sarcastic, he admonishes them saying, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' The Pharisees accuse him of being a disciple of the man, while claiming that they are disciples of Moses, and that they do not know where this man comes from. The blind man says, This is astonishing. You do not know where he comes from, but he opened my eyes. Not since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. The Pharisees continue their claim that the blind man was born entirely in sin, that he cannot teach them, and drive him out. The Pharisees are blind to what is in front of them.

Jesus hears about this, finds the blind man, and asks him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The blind man says, "Who is he? Tell me that I may believe." Jesus reveals himself to the blind man, and the blind man worships him. Jesus then declares that he came into the world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind. The blind man could not see, and now he sees--the Pharisees could see, but now they are blind to the works of God in their midst.

How often is it that we hold so tightly to what we believe that it might become a veil between us and the truth? In my own life, my readings about meditation and contemplative prayer had many stories describing practitioners experiencing various forms of ecstasy. I did not experience such and was wondering what was going wrong. I then found a piece of writing stating that such experiences are not for everyone. After some time, I began to notice a certain calmness in my thoughts and times of peace in my life that I had not experienced before. I found that only when I stopped looking for what was not there.

We hear today that there is a yearning to return to a mythical past, when things “were better than they are now.” Yet, if we are to see clearly, we must be open to the fact that others may not see the world the way we do. Perhaps it is because of fear that some are frightened of a world that no longer conforms to their mythic past, the past they want to return to. Might the oppression and suffering being inflicted upon people today have a cause in the suffering and fear that others experience when they don’t know how to be in this world? How can we help them to see that this world is as God has created it, regardless of who they are? It can seem like there is so much to do that a person can become overwhelmed and retreat to the safety of inaction. But in truth, all we are called to do is what we can, when we can, where we can. Our church supports us in doing what we can, when we can, where we can. We have multiple outreach programs that need our help in building bridges to other parts of our community. There are also ways to give that help communities and, in turn, ourselves. Service groups, study groups, prayer groups, and small groups can play a significant role in our lives. Our church also provides space for programs that assist people in need and groups that support recovery from substance abuse. All of us can contribute to these efforts through our time and treasure. Our church’s vision is supported by our church community through its faith, prayers, and actions. When we see that the people in the world who are afflicted are not sinners, but God’s children in need of help, we can find our path forward in helping them and, in our turn, say, “Now I see.”