

## Written Copy: John 9:35-41 "What Do You See?"

Fourth Sunday in Lent  
Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026

### Text: John 9:35-41

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup> He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." <sup>38</sup> He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." <sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

### The text's intent

Jesus instructs His disciples that physical maladies such as the man born blind are not necessarily the direct result of sin in their lives or their parents' lives, but instead they happen as an opportunity for the work of Christ to be made evident. Jesus then, through an object lesson perfect for a man born blind, restores his sight. This man becomes a witness to the spiritually blind Pharisees and Jews who denounce Jesus as not being from God or the Messiah and therefore refuse to see or hear the testimony that this man and his miraculous healing bring. The man doesn't know who Jesus is, but knows and believes his healing must be from God, as no other man has ever restored sight to one born blind. Rather than face and confess the logic and testimony of the man they denounce and ridicule him and throw him out of the Synagogue. But Jesus comes to him and reveals Himself as the Messiah. The man who has had his physical sight restored now receives the spiritual sight to believe and confess in Jesus as the Son of God, his Savior. Jesus tells all including the Pharisees that because this man confessed his sinful unbelief he now is forgiven and can see and know the kingdom of God. But since they refuse to confess and acknowledge their sinful unbelief, they remain blind in their sins.

### Focus Statement:

Jesus promises not to abandon those whom He welcomes into His kingdom. He comes to us not as the Savior we want Him to be but the Savior He came to be, who reveals to us our spiritual blindness so that by the faith given in the Gospel He can restore our spiritual sight in Him as the Savior who forgives all our sin and blindness by His death and resurrection.

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

When we refuse to see and hear the truth of Jesus regarding sin we can become blind to our sinful condition and the witness He brings us through the law

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

Allow Jesus to reveal to us those areas of spiritual blindness to our sin. Through His work we can see others as He sees them, those who are blind whom Jesus wants to give spiritual sight through our witness.

### Subject Sentence: Jesus restores spiritual sight through Law and Gospel

## **Introduction: What Do the Disciples See?**

Have you walked up on a conversation where other people are talking about someone, and they abruptly stop and change the subject, and you begin to wonder if it is you they've been talking about? Sometimes this is followed by an awkward silence, with an almost discernable weight hanging in the air? Have you ever found yourself to be one of those speaking about someone else only to have them walk up on the conversation? What is that weight? Is it a part of you that knows what you are doing is actually called gossip, and it's wrong?

Picture if you will, a man born blind who is sitting and begging for money in order to feed himself. Twelve men come upon him and rather than help him, or at least talk to him, they decide to talk about him in the third person while in his presence. That's what the disciples are engaged in at the beginning of our Gospel Lesson. It's a fact that those who are born deficient in one of their senses often have heightened capacity in the other Senses. Chances are a man born blind has better than average hearing. Yet the disciples see this as an opportunity to talk to their Rabbi about the theological question of how a person's sin, or their parents' sin contributes to birth defects.

Do they see this blind man as a person to whom God has given the gift of life, or as a subject to be talked about? It seems they are suffering from spiritual blindness. Have you and I ever been guilty of doing the same thing, seeing people as things to be talked about rather than talked to?

## **What Do the Pharisees See?**

How about the Pharisees? What do they see? Do they see the miracle of a man who was born blind having his sight restored? Do they understand the supernatural nature of what has happened; a healing miracle that no one else has ever performed? Do they or the man's neighbors stop and rejoice with this man on the wonderful gift he has received, giving praise and thanks to God? No, they do not. They are blind to the work of God on behalf of this man. Have you and I ever failed to recognize and give thanks and praise for the hand of God working in our lives?

Instead, the Pharisees see this as not a blessed event but a problem for what they confess and believe. First of all, this miracle, because it happened on the Sabbath, and violates what they believe should not be done on the Sabbath, is seen not as a miracle, but as a big problem. They see this miracle instead as a sin, as sinning against God's law of keeping the Sabbath holy. Yet the obvious is that God did this miracle and did it on the Sabbath! What they fail to see is the true problem: that their restrictions they have created in order to keep the Sabbath are not from God. Quite the contrary, their man-made laws that serve as a hedge to protect their keeping of the Sabbath actually stand opposed to God's law and His reason for giving it. They stand opposed to what fulfills the law, love. **Matthew 22:37-40** <sup>37</sup> **(Jesus) said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.** <sup>38</sup> **This is the greatest and most important command.** <sup>39</sup> **The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.** <sup>40</sup> **All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.** Calling a miraculous healing a sin is not love.

Have you and I ever been guilty of seeing the law wrongly? Have we ever made obeying the law about the works of our hands in exclusion to the work of our heart? Have we ever used what we see as our fine upstanding Christian life as a way to compare and elevate ourselves over the lives of others who we see as being more sinful? Have we ever failed to see the work of God in our life because we attribute that work to ourselves?

Since they see this healing not as a miracle from God but a sinful violation of the Sabbath, that means they cannot see the one who performed it as being sent by God. When the man born blind returns from washing in the Pool of Siloam, Jesus has departed. When the man comes before the Pharisees, he has not yet seen Jesus and doesn't know who He is. Unlike the man born blind the Pharisees have seen Jesus and think they know who He is. They see Him as the one who was preaching earlier that day in the temple. He accused them of being children of the devil. And in an even greater perversion of truth, He Himself claimed to be the God who appeared to Abraham! There is no way they can accept that Jesus is doing miracles by the hand of God. They are in blind sinful unbelief as to who Jesus really is, who God the Father is revealing Jesus to be. He is not the Messiah they want because He doesn't tell them what they want to hear. Do you and I ever turn away from Jesus and His word because we don't like what He is saying to us?

Since the Pharisees refuse to see Jesus as the Messiah sent from God that means they refuse to see what He did as a genuine miracle. So, the Pharisees go about trying to prove this is all a fake. They want to show that this man really wasn't born blind and probably was never blind at all. He must be working in cahoots with Jesus. The problem is there are witnesses attesting that this really is one who was born blind, and up until today was a blind beggar others had seen.

Do you and I ever struggle to see our Lord and Savior as able to work miracles in our life? Do we ever see Him as unable to fix a certain problem, perhaps because His way to fix it is not what we want or think it should be? Do we sometimes fail to see the reason for our problem is not so it can be fixed but so that God can be seen helping us through it?

## **What Do the Formerly Blind Man's Parents See?**

The Pharisees call the man's parents and question them, thinking they will testify that this is all a fake. But they don't do that. They affirm that this man is their son who was blind at birth. But they give no other help to their son. They leave him on his own to face the ever-increasing angst of the Pharisees. Why? Because of peer pressure. Because of the fear that their standing in the community will suffer if they align themselves with this miracle. They know that the Pharisees are ready to kick out of the synagogue anyone who confesses Jesus as the Messiah. They see being members of the synagogue is more important than standing in confession to Jesus. Is there ever a time when you and I see our standing in the world and before our friends as being more important than standing for Jesus?

## **What Jesus Sees and Came to Do for the Blind Man**

What did Jesus see when He looked at the blind beggar? He saw a dear child of God whom He loved, whom He came to save. He first restored his physical sight. But what about that man's spiritual sight? That is a work in progress. But even so the Holy Spirit is using this man to convict those around him of their spiritual blindness which is their unbelief.

The man doesn't know who Jesus is, but he is not without some spiritual knowledge. He knows no other man of God has done what his healer has done for him, restoring sight to one born blind; not even Moses whom these Pharisees look up to as the giver of the Law; looking up to in a way that excuses their mishandling of God's true intent for the law. He knows that only God has the power to do such a miracle, and God doesn't listen to or do such miracles to authenticate the ministry of a man who is standing in sinful opposition to God the Father.

He sees the irony in the fact that these Pharisees claim to see and know what God is doing in the world yet don't know where the man who does what only God can do is from. This formerly blind man already has greater spiritual insight than these learned Pharisees. They are being shown that they are wrong and they don't like it.

This formerly blind man is an effective witness, especially for one not trained in Law. How is this man able to be such an effective witness? Not of himself, this is the Holy Spirit working through him to humble these Pharisees. The man's sarcastic question to them about wanting to be disciples of Jesus is a nail aimed at their hearts by the Spirit. But the Pharisees remain spiritually blind and do the only thing left to do, kick this man who is causing all these problems out of the synagogue.

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When they kick the man out of the Synagogue Jesus searched for him and finds him. Then Jesus does the real work He came to do, the real reason He restored this man’s physical sight. Jesus came to restore something far more important: his spiritual sight. Jesus came and found him to bless him with saving faith in Him as the Son of Man: the one promised in the Old Testament who would stand before God Himself and be given the power to reign and rule over all things. This man received the faith to believe that Jesus is the one promised by God who would save all mankind from enemies far too strong for them. This man believed that and more, He believed that Jesus was the Son of God, his Lord and Savior.

## **What Jesus Came to do for the Pharisees**

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Jesus came not only to open the spiritual eyes of this one man, He also came to open the spiritual eyes of the Pharisees. Why on earth would He do that? Because although they are His enemies who are plotting to kill Him, He loves them wants them to see Him for who He really is. He wants them to have the spiritual eyes of faith too. What is standing in the way of Jesus work? They refuse the work of the Holy Spirit to show them their sin.

Refusing this work of the Spirit through the words of the formerly blind man, and Jesus Himself, they remain blinded by sinful unbelief. Could you and I ever find ourselves in the same predicament? We could, but I pray that never happens.

## **What Jesus Comes to Do for You**

Jesus comes to you this very day, calling out to you to prevent you from being lost to the spiritual blindness of unbelief. He comes through the Spirit working through the words of the law, the words that reveal how we stand opposed to God. He comes to show us those times when we fail to see others through His eyes as His much-loved children. He comes to show us those times when we fail to see His hand at work in our lives and instead attribute his work to someone else, including ourselves. He comes when we doubt His ability to help us, when instead of fixing a situation, He instead uses it as an opportunity to witness Him working in us and for us. He comes to us when we don't like what we see and hear from Him and try to turn away. He comes to us when we see our place in the world as more important than our place before Him.

He comes to you with the same love He had for the blind beggar and with the same plan, to restore your spiritual sight. He comes and points to you sin so that you can then see the wonderous and powerful work of forgiveness He accomplished for you when He took your place and your sins on the cross and died to remove them from you forever. He comes to you from the empty tomb so that you can know for certain, by faith, you stand forgiven, and your future is no longer eternal death, but life everlasting.

He keeps coming to you and keeps working to keep your spiritual eyes open through Word and Sacrament. He does this when you do your devotions at home, when you read your Bible, when you gather with brothers and sisters to study His Word to us. And He especially is at work here as you hear His Word preached, read, and sung, and receive Him in the Sacrament of the Altar. He comes to you and keeps coming to you not to be mean to you, not to crush you, but out of the greatest love for you. He comes to restore your spiritual sight to see yourself as God's precious child.

### **Conclusion**

In this world we all from time to time suffer from spiritual blindness over certain things in our lives. But we have a God who keeps working to point to that blindness and then miraculously to restore our spiritual sight through the strengthening of your faith in Him. He does that as His amazing gift of grace to you, so that you may continue to walk with Him in this world and all the way to eternal life to come. Amen.