

**Fourth Sunday In Lent:
Scripture Lessons**

Isaiah 42:14-21 (NIV) ¹⁴"For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant. ¹⁵I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools. ¹⁶I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them. ¹⁷But those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame. ¹⁸"Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! ¹⁹Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the servant of the LORD? ²⁰You have seen many things, but have paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing." ²¹It pleased the LORD for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious.

Ephesians 5:8-14 (NIV) For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Psalms 142:1-7 (NIV) ¹I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. ²I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble. ³When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know my way. In the path where I walk men have hidden a snare for me. ⁴Look to my right and see; no one is concerned

for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life. ⁵I cry to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." ⁶Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me. ⁷Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.

John 9:1-41 (NIV) ¹As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. ⁴As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ⁷"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

⁸His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." ¹⁰"How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. ¹¹He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." ¹²"Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such

miraculous signs?" So they were divided. ¹⁷Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet."

²⁴A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." ²⁵He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" ²⁶Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" ²⁸Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!" ²⁹We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." ³⁰The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. ³²Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

³⁴To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out. ³⁵Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶"Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." ³⁷Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." ³⁸Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." ⁴⁰Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" ⁴¹Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

Fourth Sunday In Lent:

Now I See!

John 9:1-17; 24-41

Introduction: Walking in darkness
and seeing the light
(John 8:12; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6)

A man born blind

The man's condition (verses 1-3)

The man's cure (verses 5-7)

The man's confession (verses 11-17; 21-41)

Questions for reflection:

1. Do you believe God has a purpose for your life to display His works in and through you?
2. Are you living by God's grace in a daily forgiveness and healing of your sin?
3. Are you confessing Jesus in and through your life and worshipping the Lord with your whole life?

Fourth Sunday In Lent

Now I See!

John 9:1-17; 24-41

Prayer: Heavenly Father, take away the blindness of our heart so that we can behold the greatness of your love and grace and glory; and so confess and worship you as our Lord. In Jesus name, Amen.

John 8:12 records Jesus saying to the people: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (NIV)

I know what it means to walk in darkness. Many of you know that I like to climb mountains. I've climbed many of the major peaks in the Cascades including Mt. Rainier and Mt. Baker. When you climb a glacier-covered mountain, you begin at night—when the snow bridges across the glacier crevasses are firm and solid, and the chance of rock-fall is greatly reduced. The goal is to be at the top of the mountain at daybreak and down again by noon.

Of course, beginning in the dark has one great disadvantage: it's hard to see where you are going. And even though we wear bright headlamps, its lights are puny against the expansive darkness of the mountain. The best time to climb is when you have a clear night with a full moon which illuminates your way.

A few years ago, my daughter, Lydia, and I set out to climb Mt. Shuksan in the North Cascades. As we set out in the dark from the parking lot, my greatest concern was finding our way through the rocky lower slopes of the mountain and onto the glacier. I had never climbed that side of Mt. Shuksan and knew that route finding would be difficult. On top that, it would be a dark, cloudy and moonless night.

Sure enough, we got only so far up the mountain and couldn't find the way towards the top. We wandered in the dark for two hours searching for the route. Finally

we bedded down on some heather to get a little sleep and waited for the light to dawn.

In our Gospel lesson this morning, we heard Jesus say again, *I am the light of the world*. And then Jesus demonstrated what that meant, and what it means today by giving sight to a man born blind.

In the ancient world being born blind was debilitating and isolating. But our Gospel lesson is not so much about the miracle of curing *physical* blindness, but about the obstacle of *spiritual* blindness. Our lesson goes on to demonstrate that *spiritual* blindness is even more debilitating and isolating than physical blindness. What is worse, those who are *spiritually* blind don't even know that they cannot see!

Even though the Pharisees in this passage had heard Jesus and seen his miracles, their minds were blinded.

2 Corinthians 4:4 says: *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* (NIV)

We are all born *spiritually* blind, and need the one who is the light of the world to open the eyes of our heart so that we will not walk in darkness but have the light of life.

2 Corinthians 4:6 tells about the miracle of receiving spiritual sight: *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.* (NIV)

Our Gospel lesson is not just about a man receiving physical sight. We see the eyes of his heart also being opened so that at the end he confesses faith in Jesus and worships him.

Let's unpack this text and discover the lessons we can learn from this blind man and his encounter with Jesus. First let us consider:

The man's condition: (verses 1-3)

¹*As [Jesus] went along, he saw a man blind from birth.*

²*His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*

We are told that as Jesus was going along, he saw a man blind from birth. In the ancient world such a condition often reduced one to the status of a beggar, which we find out was the case with this man. In addition, there was a social stigma against the blind and disabled believing that their situation was the result of some sin, either their own or their parents.

This man's condition is a picture of our condition without Christ.

We are all born spiritually blind without any hope of gaining sight on our own. We all suffer the shame of sin and the questions of blame and finger-pointing.

The good news of this passage, both for the blind man then, and for us now, is that we are told Jesus **saw** a man blind from birth. Jesus noticed him and knew his condition. We can be sure that Jesus sees us too. He notices us and he knows our need.

And not only does Jesus know the blind man's condition, but he knows his destiny. Jesus not only sees this man's present misery and shame but sees what, by God's grace, he will become; he sees the greater purpose God has for his life.

We may wonder why God has allowed some of the painful or hurtful circumstances in our lives to occur. We may wonder why God has allowed illness or disease, especially if they affect our children.

I can't imagine the grief experienced by the parents of this man, born blind, especially when society blamed them for their child's situation. I can't imagine the darkness that engulfed this man's childhood.

But God knows our condition and He knows the work that He plans to do in us and through us.

Jesus answered the disciple's question of blame by saying, ³*"Neither this man nor his parents sinned" . . . "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.*

God is not all about placing blame, but concerned about giving blessing. Our spiritual blindness and our spiritual need go back to the sin of Adam and Eve. But God's promise of blessing and the restoration of his creation go back just as far.

Next, we discover,

The man's cure (verses 5-7)

⁵*While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*

⁶*Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.*

⁷*"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.*

Without even asking the man if he wants to be healed, Jesus just proceeded to cure the man's malady—his blindness. And Jesus didn't keep his social distance. Jesus spits on the ground, makes some mud with it with his hands and places it on the man's eyes. I don't know about you, but in this time of epidemic, I'm constantly telling myself *not* to touch my face or rub my eyes when I'm out in public and have touched high contact surfaces. Inside I want to scream at Jesus, "No! wash your hands, don't touch his eyes!"

But Jesus is not the carrier of infection; he is the one who is pure and sinless and can open our blind eyes.

Just as Jesus reached out and touched the man at his point of need, Jesus reaches out to us at the place of our need.

Jesus then sent the man, with a firm command, to wash in the pool called “sent.” Verse 7 continues, *so the man went and washed, and came home seeing.*

In my mind, the man was highly motivated to do as Jesus said because, if it were me, I’d want to wash that mud and spit off my eyes as soon as I could. There may have been other places for the man to wash his face, but he obeyed Jesus.

Every detail given to us by John in this gospel has a purpose: from the making of the mud to the name of the pool. Let me give you just one example. Jesus often referred to himself as the One *sent* from God. He referred to himself that way once in this chapter, five times in the previous chapter, and over twenty-five times in the rest of the gospel. So when Jesus *sent* the man to the pool called *sent*, he meant for us to understand that it is not the pool which had healing powers, but the One who was *sent* from God the Father who had the power to heal. Jesus himself was the cure for the man’s blindness and for our *spiritual* blindness.

We may not always understand all the details of God working in our lives, why God has chosen to allow somethings to happen to us, but God is working out His purpose at every small point in our story.

Finally we turn to

The man’s confession (verses 11-17; 21-41)

We see this man’s confession, of who Jesus is, grow as the account progresses. When first asked who healed him, he simply replied, ¹¹ . . . *“The man they call Jesus.*

Later when the Pharisees ask him who he thinks Jesus is, he answers (in verse 17), *“He is a prophet.”* A prophet was one who spoke and acted for God—he was God’s authorized representative. In verses 31-32 he emphasizes that by saying, ³¹ *We know that God does*

not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. ³²*Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.* ³³*If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”*

So he confesses Jesus as a godly man who is from God and does God’s will.

Later, when the man was expelled by the Pharisees, Jesus found him and revealed to him who he was. The man then confessed faith in Jesus as the Messiah (The Son of Man) and worshipped him.

³⁵*Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”* ³⁶*“Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”* ³⁷*Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”* ³⁸*Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.*

Like the good shepherd (which Jesus describes himself as in the next chapter, John chapter 10) Jesus seeks out the man he had healed and revealed himself to him.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Without Jesus revealing himself to us through the pages of Scripture, we would forever be wandering in the dark.

2 Corinthians 4:6 (NIV) For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

There is so much more to be said and discovered in this passage of Scripture. We have barely scratched the surface, but at least this is what we should know:

1. Jesus sees and knows the **condition** of each of our hearts. He doesn’t need a diagnostic test to see if we are infected with sin—he knows that we are. He knows every other detail of our lives as well.

God also has a wise, good, and Christ-exalting purpose for your life and for everything that happens to you

2. Jesus is the **cure** for our sickness. He is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It was by his wounds that we are healed.

He is the only way to the full, final, joyful experience of that purpose.

3. Finally, Jesus, having healed us, seeks us out and shows himself to us so that we can make a **confession** of faith in him as our Savior and Lord and fall at his feet in worship.

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV) *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

Ephesians 5:8 tells us: *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.* (NIV) Live in a courageous confession of faith in Jesus and in joyful worship of him.

Let us pray