

# Sunday Message

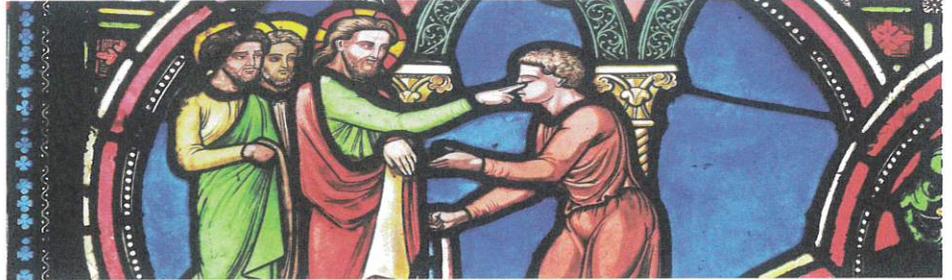
4TH SUNDAY OF LENT (LAETARE)

THE WORD

Year A • 15 March 2026 • Psalter Week 4

## SEEING WITH GOD'S EYES

JOHN 9:1-41



Today's Gospel tells the wonderful story of a man born blind who becomes a powerful witness to Jesus.

The blind man trusts Jesus enough to allow him to put mud in his eyes; then he obeys Jesus' instructions to wash in the Pool of Siloam. And the man is healed – he is able to see. In the long conversations that follow, first with his neighbours and then with the Pharisees, the man born blind comes to see more and more clearly who Jesus is, and to lead others to faith. He moves from not knowing Jesus, to recognising him as a prophet, to seeing him as a man of God, then as the Son of Man, and finally to acknowledging him as Lord.

His journey of faith goes from blindness of eyes and heart to being able to see not only with his eyes but also with his heart. ■

### PRAY

Pray especially for young people who lack self-esteem and find it hard to see their God-given beauty and potential.

### LEARN

The Christian is someone who leads others to Jesus.

Jesus is the light of the world.

We are called to see ourselves and others the way God sees us.

### DO

Lent is a time when we are invited to become aware of our blind spots. Examine your life, your relationships, your values, your attitudes. Look for your blind spots. Ask the Lord to heal you, as he healed the man born blind.

### SAY

"Lord, I thank you for the gift of faith. Help me to see as you see. Amen."

### REFLECT

The first reading describes how David, a young shepherd boy, is anointed king of Israel. God instructs the prophet Samuel to visit the home of Jesse, for God has chosen a king from among his sons. Samuel was certain that Eliab, the first born, was the one God had selected. After all, traditionally the oldest is recognised as leader. Of all eight sons, David would have been considered the one least likely to be selected. He was the youngest, a boy of fresh complexion, the least experienced, but God instructs Samuel not to judge by appearances but as God does, by looking into the heart. Humans look at appearances but God looks beyond appearances, at what really counts.

We can only imagine how shocked Jesse and his family must have been at this extraordinary turn of events – that God had personally selected one of his own sons to be king of Israel and that the one selected was the last one they would have considered.

This story offers an invaluable lesson we should take to heart. We must not judge by appearances, but try to see ourselves and others with God's eyes, try to see the potential and the good in every person.

Life today, especially for younger people, is harder than when I was growing up in the 1970s. There was no internet back then, no social media. We hadn't to worry about online bullying or how we looked on Instagram or TikTok. Young women weren't inundated daily with hundreds of images of stick-thin barbie lookalikes, all conforming to unrealistic beauty standards today's girls are told they must aspire to. Andrew Tate wasn't around to preach his message of toxic masculinity, encouraging boys to treat girls as objects.

The pressure today to be successful, with a rewarding career and a big income and a perfect family and a nice house, is huge. Social media, with its obsession with looks

and money and celebrity, makes self-love even harder.

And this pressure costs. It damages self-esteem. We compare ourselves with others and think we don't measure up, that we're lacking, even that we're failures. It has other negative effects – like self-harm, eating disorders, addiction, depression.

It's hard on young women. In her book about her battle with anorexia called *Good Girls*, Hadley Freeman writes: "We see the impossible standards set for women: be smart but not ambitious; look perfect but don't be vain; don't age but don't get plastic surgery; be slim but don't be obsessed with diets; be smart but not smarter than the men around you; be pleasing and have no needs of your own. This is the nonsense women have to put up with."

She's right. Women shouldn't have to put up with it.

It's hard on young men, too. They're told that to succeed, they must be brash, buff, tough, never soft or sentimental, that women exist for their pleasure. The blogs and websites that make up what's called the manosphere tell them masculinity is all about being active: doing, achieving, overpowering, being dominant, while femininity is all about being passive: being judged, being an object, being small, the smaller the better. This is enormously damaging to many young men.

Of course, we don't all have the same talents, opportunities, or looks, but we're all gifted, each of us unique, precious, irreplaceable, and the only thing that matters is seeing ourselves the way God sees us and loving ourselves the way God loves us. God saw all he had made and found it very good – and that includes every one of us. We must see the beauty, the gifts we have in abundance, and appreciate them, use them well. We need to look beyond appearances, as God does, to what truly counts. ■

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

*Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her.  
Be joyful, all who were in mourning;  
exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.*

**COLLECT**

O God, who through your Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING** 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

A reading from the First Book of Samuel.

In those days: The LORD said to Samuel, 'Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.'

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.' But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.' And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, 'The LORD has not chosen these.' Then Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here.' And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, 'Arise, anoint him, for this is he.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** Psalm 23(22):1-3a. 3b-4. 5. 6. R. 1

**R: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

1. The LORD is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose.  
Near restful waters he leads me;  
he revives my soul. **R.**
2. He guides me along the right path,  
for the sake of his name.  
Though I should walk in the valley of the shadow of death,  
no evil would I fear, for you are with me.  
Your crook and your staff will give me comfort. **R.**
3. You have prepared a table before me  
in the sight of my foes.  
My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing. **R.**
4. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life.  
In the LORD's own house shall I dwell  
for length of days unending. **R.**

**SECOND READING** Ephesians 5:8-14

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians.

Brothers and sisters: At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL** John 8:12

**R: Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus.**

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;  
whoever follows me will have the light of life.

**R: Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus.**

**GOSPEL** John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

*(a longer version may be read: John 9:1-41)*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

At that time: As Jesus passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.

He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'It is he.' Others said, 'No, but he is like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.'

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.' Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?' And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?' He said, 'He is a prophet.'

They answered him, 'You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?' And they cast him out.

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 worshipped him.

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

We place before you with joy these offerings,  
which bring eternal remedy, O Lord,  
praying that we may both faithfully revere them  
and present them to you, as is fitting,  
for the salvation of all the world.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**The Lord anointed my eyes: I went, I washed,  
I saw and I believed in God.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

O God, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world,  
illuminate our hearts, we pray,  
with the splendour of your grace,  
that we may always ponder  
what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty  
and love you in all sincerity.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**