

## **Sermon March 15, 2026**

### **Children's Time – St Patrick prayer**

#### **John 9:1-41**

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am he." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

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. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does

he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus<sup>[c]</sup> to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "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?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never 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." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

## Amazing Grace

The blame game... it's easy to play but destructive to our relationships. "It's not my fault! He did it! She made me do it! He did it first!" It's the way we avoid personal responsibility or looking deep into our hearts. We lash out and blame someone... anyone... for the things that are wrong in our lives.

Look at our own faith narrative. Adam cried out: "Eve made me eat that fruit." And, Eve turned around and blamed the snake. When the Israelites get caught dancing around the golden calf, they blame Moses for leaving them behind. "It's not my fault – he made me do it!" It goes on and on.

Faced with tragedy and struggles, anxiety and confusion, many are quick to assign blame. This instinct becomes most dangerous, when we point religious fingers... when we sign God's name to our personal grievances or fears. The blame is justified because it comes from God

Today, we hear the disciples struggle with the blame game: *Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*

They wanted a formula. They wanted to believe that suffering is always a direct result of someone's failure because that makes the world feel predictable. If you're good, you're blessed; if you're suffering, you must have messed up.

Jesus refuses to participate in the blame game. Grace begins when we stop asking "Whose fault is this?" and start asking "How can God's love be revealed through this?"

As always, Jesus sees the world the way God wants us to see it. "Neither sinned" he says, "no one involved here is. No one is to blame. No one!" Jesus simply refuses to play the blame game.

Jesus saw that not only do we use the blame game to hold each other accountable. Sometimes we place all the blame on God. The unexplainable becomes understandable if we hold God accountable for tragedy. But here, Jesus shows us once again that God does not will human pain in order to punish us. Never. God doesn't create circumstances to watch us

suffer. God doesn't give us hardship to test us. God doesn't "send us more than we can handle."

After my mother's death, a well-meaning neighbor placed a hand on my father's arm and said that to him "God never gives us more than we can handle." He looked at her in pure rage and said "That is the stupidest thing I have ever heard" and walked away.

That platitude and the sentiments that underlie it, suggest that God intentionally sends us hardships, tragedy. I do not believe God does this. I do not believe that God kills fathers and mothers and husbands and wives and children merely to test us. No! I believe God promised that, though bad things happen... and we know they will... God will not abandon us. Never.

So, you are probably wondering right now, that if God doesn't will suffering and pain, why does God allow it to happen? This question has stumped people since the beginning of time, and there are no easy answers.

But, Jesus offers us a glimpse of what the answer is. Immediately after he says that no one is to blame for this man's blindness, he adds that the man was born blind "*so that God's works might be revealed in him.*" He wasn't born this way as a punishment, but Jesus' random meeting with him offers an opportunity for Jesus to teach us about God's holy reign.

Jesus **knows** that this man's blindness is not this man's fault and it is not God's will. Yet God can still bring good from even this apparently senseless tragedy. God did not cause this blindness, but God can work amidst this blindness, and that is why I would change the saying that God doesn't send us more than we can handle.

What if we said, "With God's help, there is nothing we cannot handle"? Or as I often say at the end of our time together: "Beloved, Your strength may fail but God's hand never will!"

Nothing we cannot handle. Broken bones... broken spirits... broken hearts. Accidents...suicide... cancer...war. With God's help, there's nothing we cannot handle. Because with God's help, we are never truly alone.

And we know the rest of the story. This man sees again and comes slowly to some understanding of who Jesus truly is. Yet there's more to understand, because we, too, can be blind to Christ. And no matter who is to blame for our blindness, still Christ comes to us always again and again, showing himself in order to heal our spiritual blindness.

With God's help, there is nothing we can't handle. Your strength may fail but God's hand never will!

And when we know Christ, believing is seeing. Like Paul on the road to Damascus, we "see the light." Cured of our spiritual blindness and empowered to see the light. It is in the light, that we experience God's amazing grace.

Despite our tendency to blame others, despite our unwillingness to let God help us handle the unbearable, Christ is still at it: curing our blindness, shining upon us, transforming us for lives of new vision and bold faithfulness. Offering us amazing grace that pushes away our spiritual blindness and allows us to see the world the way God sees it. As Paul wrote in today's Epistle:

*For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light.*

If Christ's light shines not only upon us but somehow within us and through us, too, well, that changes everything. Because if the light is shining through us and even within us, surely we cannot cast shadows upon others. It's only when we block the light through blame or lack of faith that we cast others into darkness.

The call to us today is to be like Jesus. He wasn't much interested in pointing fingers at our past or casting blame. Instead, Jesus shines the light on our lives and sends us out to do the same.

With God's help, there is nothing we can't handle. Your strength may fail but God's hand never will!

May God give you...

For every storm, a rainbow,

For every tear, a smile,  
For every care, a promise,  
And a blessing in each trial.  
For every problem life sends,  
A faithful friend to share,  
For every sigh, a sweet song,  
And an answer for each prayer