

Sermon for Sunday, Feb. 15, 2026

John 9:1-41

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Today's Scripture reading contains many words that are related to vision and the sense of sight. Words like:

- See, saw, seen
- Blind
- Eyes
- Sight

These words combined with an emphasis on law and gospel form the basis for today's sermon. As we did last week, we will spend time considering the law and the gospel remembering that the law convicts and the gospel saves.

There's an entire sermon packed into the first three verses of the Scripture reading for today and the primary focus will be on these verses. I have chosen to follow the Scripture chronologically—in the order that the story is told. That means that we begin with some gospel. Then we will tackle the law as it becomes apparent in this story and finish by returning to the gospel again.

The very first verse of chapter nine contains gospel/good news. "As Jesus walked along, he *saw* a man blind from birth." Jesus *saw* a man born blind; a man who couldn't physically see him. Jesus *sees* the needs of the people. By extension, Jesus *sees* us and *sees* our needs. That's gospel/good news because we need to be *seen*. We need to be reassured that God *sees* us and *sees* our needs.

It's time now, as we continue through this passage, to look for the "law" The second verse in the passage begins with the disciples asking a question: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

This is a question that comes straight out of the law. Not just "did someone commit a major sin, here teacher? Is that why this terrible tragedy occurred?" That's too surface level. The thought process that lies under the disciple's question is more like this: look at this poor fellow. He sits as a beggar; he has been blind all of his life. What happened? The disciples never get a chance to express their next thought but you likely know what they are thinking: "please tell us what he or his family did so that we can avoid doing

the same thing and bringing this terrible punishment down on our family..."

The disciple's question comes straight out of their understanding of the law. It was commonly understood that when something horrible happened to a person it was because there was a terrible sin that had caused punishment to come to the person or their family. In asking this question the disciples are passing judgment on the man and his family.

Making judgments like this didn't just occur 2000 years ago. Making these judgments occurs today—all the time. The law is our tendency to judge another person harshly without having ANY understanding of their life or their choices; without understanding their lack of options, without understanding that sometimes people have to make desperate life or death choices. The law of judgment makes us think to ourselves, "I would never get myself into this kind of mess! Surely I'm smarter than that!"

Here are some examples of how we cast judgment on people today: Are you homeless? You just aren't working hard enough! It must be a result of bad decisions. Do you have cancer or dementia or some other devastating disease? You must not have lived in a healthy manner. Addicted to alcohol or drugs: you might have a disease but surely you just aren't strong enough to fight your addiction. Your disease must be your fault; weakness of character. Does your skin color indicate that you are an immigrant to this country? And therefore you don't belong here? How dare any of us make those judgments! And yet we know that we do. We are enslaved to the law and the law convicts! (Pause)

The good news/gospel is that Jesus has an answer to the question of the disciples an answer that dismisses the law.

It is written in verse 3. "Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." The tragedy of this family had nothing to do with sin. As difficult as their lives must have been and as deep as their grief must have been, God was at work, in, with, and under this tragedy.

As some of you might know, our family has a genetic health condition with a long complicated medical name. Our son Andrew had many challenges growing up as a result of his brittle bones. It was awful! But this health challenge was not a punishment for some perceived sin. No, this is not about a human sinning in some

egregious way and God choosing to punish down through the generations. My life path was altered as I cared for Andrew and ultimately that path led to becoming an ordained pastor. I humbly trust that God's works in the world have been revealed through my pastoring work among you. "so that God's works might be revealed in him." Remember God is always at work in your life; even in the most difficult and dark circumstances.

We know is that the world is a broken place. People in the state of MN have seen this first hand. But just as God was at work in my family's dark and difficult life circumstances, God has been and continues to be at work among the people of this state. There are a multitude of quiet things occurring: delivery of groceries, shuttling kids to and from school, providing warm clothing to people released from the Whipple building with no coats, hats, mittens, or boots, people meeting the newly released and giving them access to a telephone or an Uber ride so that they can return to their family and their home. God is at work among us taking care of the imprisoned and the frightened.

Remember: Jesus (God) sees. Jesus sees us and sees our need. In last week's Scripture reading Jesus sought out the invalid who had been healed to talk to him because he saw the man's need. He did the same in today's reading: seeking out the man who had been healed, especially since this man had been forced out of the synagogue, out of his faith community. Jesus reinforced his faith in the Son of Man and laid the ground work for him to find a new community of faith.

Over the last three weeks we have heard three stories where Jesus heals. First healing the Samaritan woman at the well from her isolation, then healing the invalid at the pool, and today, healing a man born blind. In doing so Jesus is demonstrating his identity as God's Son, living here on earth among the people God loves. Jesus didn't spend time with the elite. He spent time with the poor, the hungry, the sick and injured, the ones that society consistently overlooked. He did so because he recognized that they were the ones that needed hope. They were the ones who needed grace. They were the ones who needed to know of God's unconditional love for them—just as they were.

And the same is true for us: we are the ones who need grace. We are the ones who need to have our eyes opened so that we can see the mighty works of God occurring around us. We are the ones who need to know of God's unconditional love for us—just as we are.

This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and our Scripture reading is a teaching from Jesus about "the good shepherd." This passage is a continuation of today's passage. I ask that, as you are able, remember today's reading because I will be making reference to it when I preach on Wednesday. The healing story of the man born blind prepares us to consider how Jesus is our good shepherd.

Let's pray: Good and gracious God, thank you for seeing us and recognizing our needs. Help us to see you at work in the world and to give praise and thanks to you for your enduring love for us. Amen.