

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT – YEAR A
WILL THE BLIND SEE?**

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Jn. 9:1-41

I think physical blindness is a terrible affliction, but is it worse than spiritual blindness? Today's Gospel touches on both kinds of blindness. Let us consider the following examples:

One man brushes his young daughter away when she wants to show him her artwork. "Don't disturb me! Can't you see I'm trying to watch Match of the Day".

Another father who is physically blind is so overwhelmed by his love for his daughter that he writes the song, "Isn't She Lovely" in her honour. His name is Stevie Wonder.

Which man truly sees his daughter? Which man is blind?

Here are two more examples. A man ignores his wife's pleas for attention. She wants to know if he still thinks she is attractive. She wants him to listen to her hopes and her hurts and share a greater intimacy with him. All he wants to know is has she washed his shirt for work.

Another husband, a blind man, who loves his wife so dearly writes her a love song, "You are so beautiful to me. You're everything I hoped for. You're everything I need. You are so beautiful to me." His name is Ray Charles.

Which man truly sees his wife? Which man is blind?

Our Gospel text features this very same irony concerning blindness in its various forms. A man is born blind, but is healed by Jesus. Pharisees are born sighted, but are spiritually blind. This text asks us, who is really blind? What kind of blindness is hardest to heal?

Notice first the man who was born blind. In the days of the Gospel, blindness from birth was considered the most difficult

blindness to heal. The disciples are so overwhelmed by this man's predicament that they ask, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" Surely, they thought, some terrible sin is behind such a severe punishment! Jesus brushes aside such idle speculation, and the theology behind it which assumes that all human suffering is the direct result of God's punishment for sin.

Jesus wants the man to see so He spits on the ground and with the mud makes a paste, smears it on his eyes. He tells the man to wash in the pool of Siloam. However, his healing is not complete. Jesus wants him to have insight, not just sight. He still must come to know about Jesus, the One who has given him sight. Only then will he become a witness for God, and learn to give God glory for his sight. By the end of the chapter, he truly sees.

The blind man had lived in a world of perpetual darkness. Never in his life had he seen the light of day. This gift of sight must have been an indescribably wonderful moment. Instead what should have been an occasion of joy became a storm centre of debate.

Now let us take a look at the Pharisees. These men were the respected holy men of the community. They tried to obey the Law of God to the letter. They studied and explained the scriptures. When the man who was born blind was healed, the crowd brought him to the Pharisees. They would surely be able to interpret this miracle. At first, the Pharisees were divided in their opinion. They genuinely struggled to understand the miracle. The man who was blind did not even know who had healed him, much less the significance of Jesus' call to faith. The Pharisees began their investigation by first interrogating the parents of the man. They wanted to see if the healing might be a hoax. The parents were afraid to get involved. If they showed any sign of siding with Jesus they could be expelled from the synagogue. They suggested questioning their son who had been healed. The man who now sees is not afraid to be honest with them. He says, "It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the

eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do this thing.” This made the Pharisees really angry. They were offended that a common man like Jesus could heal. They were also offended that a common man like the formerly blind man would dare to instruct them on the ways of God! Instead of conducting a serious search for truth, the Pharisees clung to their own version of the truth. By the end of the chapter, they were hurling insults at the man, shutting their ears to his testimony, and throwing him out of their presence. The Pharisees become increasingly blind throughout this story. By the end, they are clinging to their spiritual blindness, eyes tightly shut.

When Jesus heard what they had done to the man He found him. How pleased He was to hear this lonely man, after He had revealed to him whom He was profess, “I do believe, Lord.” Then Jesus had the last word, “I came into this world for judgement, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.”

All the signs were there that Jesus had given sight to this blind man and yet the Pharisees would not believe in Jesus. How true is the old adage, “There is none so blind as he who will not see.” Surely the blindness of the Pharisees is the hardest blindness to heal. They just did not want to see!

Lord Jesus, because of our sins to some degree we are spiritually blind. Forgive us our sins and heal our spiritual blindness.