

March 15, 2026
The Fourth Sunday in Lent

1 Samuel 16: 1-13
Psalm 23
Ephesians 5: 8-14
John 9: 1-41

There's a moment in our Gospel lesson today that I haven't been able to get out of my mind. And...it isn't the healing of the blind man. It's not the doubt and skepticism of the crowds. It isn't even the debate about sin. Those would all be interesting to consider.

But, what has taken hold of my heart is this part of the story...

It's what Jesus does when he hears that the blind man (the one he had just healed) had been driven out of his community. Jesus goes to find the man and when he finds him, he says, "Do you believe in the Son of man?"

The man responds with a question of his own..."And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."

Jesus then says, "You have seen him and the one speaking to you is he."

And that's when the man says, "Lord, I believe."

Now...the one of the draw backs to only having a written text is that we don't get to hear how the words are spoken. We don't hear the tone of people's voices or the emotions they are trying to convey. But what we do know is how Jesus showed his love to others. So with that in mind, I want you to imagine hearing these words exchanged between these two men in a tone that is gentle, loving, and full of wonder.

We'll come back to that in a moment. But first, I want you to put yourself in the blind man's shoes.

His entire life had just been changed by an incredible act of mercy, a miraculous healing that gave him sight for the very first time. Just imagine what it felt like to have light start to seep in, as he blinked his eyes the world around him became clearer and clearer until he could see every color, every person, every animal that was around him.

And he starts to say to himself as he blinks his eyes...I have been healed. And then he says a little louder to those standing around him...I've been healed. And then even louder to the crowds. I am the one! I have been healed! This is the best day of my life!

As people doubted and questioned him he just kept reaffirming...I'm the one! Jesus did this for me!

But in their lack of understanding, the people got so caught up in judgement and suspicion that they cast him out. They couldn't comprehend this incredible gift of grace and so they turned their backs on him. And in that moment all this man's joy began to fade as he was met with condemnation. Surely, it was a sucker punch...a hit that took him out at the knees. You can feel his heart sinking as he says quieter this time...but I've been healed.

Jesus hears what has happened. He hears that this man has been driven out of his hometown and Jesus doesn't hesitate...he seeks out the man and finds him. He doesn't leave him to struggle alone.

And here's the moment I keep coming back to...I imagine Jesus sitting down next to the man, maybe holding his hand, looking into his eyes...eyes that can now see. And for a few moments maybe they just sit quietly together. Taking in the pain and exhaustion of this experience. Trying to make sense of the cruelty and judgement of the people in this community.

And then Jesus whispers the words...do you believe in the Son of Man?

It's an offer, not a quiz. It's a gift, not a litmus test.

I love the man's response...because he wants to know and understand. He is desperate for comfort and desperate for someone to allow him to live into this new life he has been given. To replenish his joy. To accept him and love him unconditionally. Not as someone who is blind but as someone who has overcome his darkness.

That's when this story becomes so powerful to me. Jesus essentially says...I see you and I'm not going to let you go. Can't you hear the man letting out a long sigh of relief? Accepting hope maybe for the first time in his life. Allowing joy to return. And that's when he says...I believe.

I believe in your grace.
I believe in your love for me.
I believe that I am not alone.
I am that person!

Have you ever felt that kind of wide open love? I hope you have. The whisper of someone who cares and is going to walk beside you right when you need it the most.

Do you believe? Because I'm not going to let you go.

That's the love of Christ poured out in our moment of greatest need. Reminding us that in our suffering, Jesus will always be with us. Not to see how much faith we have but to show us how to have faith in our darkest times.

In our Lenten study this past week we named one of those dark times...the dark time when we want to scream out at God...I didn't sign up for this! I didn't sign up to be sick. I didn't sign up to

be abused. I didn't sign up to get a divorce or to be without a job. It's the moment of our greatest lament where we lay it all out for God. Our anger, our desperation, our sadness, our fear.

It's the rawness of the human experience.

And I bet the blind man had many days where his cry to God was loud and assertive. And I'm sure there were also days his cry was weak and despondent not knowing if his life would ever be different.

Maybe you have had those days. God, I didn't sign up for this!

That's why I love this text. Because it tells the story of that very moment...when things seem dark and insurmountable. That's when Jesus seeks us out and sits down beside us.

So, this morning, I want you to take away this one simple truth...that no matter what darkness you may be facing, you are not alone. And in those moments when you want to call out to God in anger or fear or grief...I want you to listen for the words of Jesus spoken in that gentle, loving tone...Do you believe? Because I am never going to let you go. Amen.