



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

**Sermon for Lent 4**

March 15, 2026

## Closer to the Light

### John 9:1–7, 13–17, 34–39

<sup>1</sup> Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup> I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

<sup>6</sup> When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. <sup>7</sup> And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

<sup>13</sup> They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”

<sup>16</sup> Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.”

Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.

<sup>17</sup> They said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?”

He said, “He is a prophet.”

<sup>34</sup> They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

<sup>36</sup> He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?”

<sup>37</sup> And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.”

<sup>38</sup> Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he worshiped Him.

<sup>39</sup> And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”



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A man comes home at the end of the day, sits down in his favorite chair, and takes up the daily paper. His wife enters the room and notices he's having a little trouble reading, mainly because his chair is too far away from the light. So she says to him: "Sweetheart, come closer to the light." This may seem like common sense, but this common sense becomes great wisdom when we apply it to our spiritual lives. You see, too many of us are groping through life, uncertain and afraid about the future, perplexed by problems, baffled by what seems to be a pointless existence. People like this often find themselves at the brink of despair because they see no end to their troubles. But the real problem isn't the fact that they have troubles – it's that they're living too far away from Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. So, when we see them fumbling in the darkness, what's the best thing we can do for them? That's right – invite them to come closer to the Light.

Jesus says in our text: "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." He then proceeds to demonstrate this light in three different ways. First of all, He does it by demonstrating His power. Standing before Him was a man who was born blind. Jesus spits on the ground and makes a paste of the clay, puts it on the man's eyes, and then tells him to go wash himself in the pool of Siloam. And what do you know – to the astonishment of this man, his parents, and his neighbors, suddenly he can see! How easy it was for Jesus to cure this man's eyes! What marvelous light He demonstrated through His awesome power!

But, how easy it is for us to forget that He exercises that same power today. How often do we worry and fret about things because we forget that the same Jesus rules the universe today just as He did in the days of our text? God help us never to be blind to the light of His power.

But power without compassion is a frightening thing, so Jesus proceeds to demonstrate the light of His love and mercy. Not only had this blind man had to live with his physical affliction, but apparently he had to deal with the humiliating insinuation that either he or his parents must have been guilty of some terrible sin for which he was now being punished with blindness. Can you imagine going through life having people think either you or your parents were terrible sinners simply because you suffered from a physical handicap? How miserable! But, in His tender compassion, Jesus proceeded to remove this man's burden by miraculously healing his eyes.

Without God's mercy we would be terrified of His omnipotence and shy away from Him. But, knowing His love, we are drawn to Him so that with all boldness and confidence we place our troubles before Him, knowing that He has an ear for every plea and a heart for every tear. What marvelous light He demonstrated through His mercy and compassion!

But the brightness of His light is not only seen in His power and love; it is also seen in His sense of urgency. He tells His disciples: "As long as it is day, I must do the work of



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him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work." Jesus was keenly aware of His mission. As He told Zacchaeus: "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). And His work had to be done now, while it was still day, for the night would come when no one could work.

How I pray that God would give each of us such a keen sense of our mission and the urgency to accomplish it! I'm afraid that many don't really understand the real purpose for their existence on earth. Do you remember that portion of the Catechism in which Luther explains our purpose in life? He says in the closing words of his explanation of the Second Article that Christ did everything He did so "That I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." Do you remember that? Do you understand what this means? We have been saved to serve – to be witnesses of the Faith so that others may share it with us.

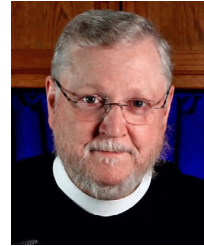
Beloved, we need to come to terms with our purpose in life and to share Christ's own sense of urgency about our mission. The work needs to be done now, as if there is no tomorrow. Who knows, there might not be a tomorrow. Then what? When the night comes, the time for work will be gone, never to return. Today is our opportunity to do the work of the Lord. May God help us to be faithful reflections of the light of Christ.

There is a great need for inviting those sitting in darkness to come close to the Light. Look at the Pharisees in our text. They were in total darkness because of their distance from Christ, the Light of the world. No, the distance was not geographical, obviously; rather, it was spiritual. There was a deep gulf between their spirit and the spirit of Christ. They were the ones He referred to as having eyes, but not seeing; having ears, but not hearing.

How had these enemies of Christ come to such a spiritual state of affairs? They simply had to reject the evidence. Here was a man blind from birth and now his sight was restored. He, his parents, and his neighbors all testified that it was true. But how did the Pharisees react? John says: "They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight" (vs. 18). There are none so blind as those who will not see!

Sadly, this kind of blindness didn't end with that generation. Unbelief is running rampant in our day. You know the cultural manifestations as well as I do; we needn't recount them now. But how ought we to respond? We could sit back and complain about how awful things are . . . or . . . we could invite unbelievers to come closer to the Light.

But, they're not the only ones who need to hear this invitation. There are those already sitting in the light who need to come closer. This was certainly the case with the blind man whose sight had been restored. Few people have had a happier miracle performed on them. Yet, when the neighbors asked him about Jesus, he couldn't tell them



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anything about Him; the only thing he was really certain of was that it was Jesus who had made clay, laid it on his eyes, and then instructed him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, and that as a result of this he could now see. "Where was Jesus now?" He didn't know. And when the Pharisees asked him his opinion about Jesus, he said: "He is a prophet" (v. 17). Even when Jesus spoke to him later, and asked him whether he believed on the Son of God, he replied: "Who is He? Tell me so that I may believe in Him" (v. 36). It wasn't until Jesus told him point-blank that He was the Son of God that the man finally confessed faith in Christ.

There are far too many today just as spiritually illiterate as this man. They receive the blessings of God, and they're willing to be counted among His disciples, but their knowledge of Christ is shockingly meager. Many still believe that Jesus is only a good example to follow and that their salvation really depends on their own good works. Others believe that everybody will get to go to heaven, because "God wouldn't really send anybody to hell, would He?" Well, if that's what you believe, you need to come closer to the Light.

But the invitation doesn't even stop there. Some of Jesus' own disciples believed that this man's sins or his parents' sins had resulted in his being born blind. Even they had not completely shaken off the idea that God was some kind of vindictive and vengeful judge and that every misfortune in life was a result of His judgment.

There are those who still believe this. They may even rebuke themselves when they suffer some discomfort, fretting over whether God is cruelly punishing them for some sin of the past. Beloved, if you believe that, come closer to the Light! The forgiveness of God means that Christ has freed us from the punishment of the Law. If God has anything to do with our suffering, it's only a temporary chastening through which He shows us His love and causes us to grow.

In conclusion, the reality is that we all need to come closer to the Light. There's not one of us who live and walk in the light of Christ as we should. God help us to see Him as the Light and grant us the strength and courage not only to come closer, but also to reflect His light into the darkness of our world. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen