

## Fourth Sunday in Lent (Laetare\*) March 22, 2020

Annunciation of the Lord March 25, 2020

Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

# Living the Lutheran Lectionary

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.*

*An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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- ✦



<https://stmarks.edu.au/review-article/john-9-1-17-blindness/>

### Hymn of the Day

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 571 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 245**

**“God loved the world that he gave”**

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 972\* The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 319**

**“I trust, O Christ, in You alone”**

### **“God loved the world that he gave”**

“August Crull (translator of LSB 571) was born January 27, 1845 in Rostock, Germany... He was educated at the Gymnasium in Rostock, and at Concordia College in St. Louis and Fort Wayne where he graduated in 1862... In 1865, Crull graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He became assistant pastor at Trinity Church in Milwaukee and also served as Director of the Lutheran High School. Later he was pastor of the Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. From 1873 to 1915, he was professor of the German language and literature at Concordia College in Fort Wayne, Indiana...

--[www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/](http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/)”

- [https://hymnary.org/text/god\\_loved\\_the\\_world\\_so\\_that\\_he\\_gave](https://hymnary.org/text/god_loved_the_world_so_that_he_gave)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYKVPJE1D2U> [Andrew Remillard](#)  
Piano from TLH 245
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCgG2TRHW90> The prelude ... is from Six Hymn Improvisations, Set 9, Concordia Publishing House  
Organist is Mark Peters.

### **“I trust, O Christ, in You alone”**

“One of the surprises of Lutheran Service Book is that there are more hymns in the LSB collection than those found in the pew edition. While the pew edition’s highest hymn number is 966, today’s Hymn of the Day Bible Study covers hymn 972. “I Trust, O Christ, in You Alone” can be found in the Lutheran Service Builder computer software as well as LSB Accompaniment for the Hymns and LSB Guitar Chord Edition. “I Trust” appeared as Lutheran Worship 357, and as Lutheran Book of Worship 395 in a translation prepared for that hymnal. “In Thee Alone, O Christ, My Lord” was its title as hymn 319 in The Lutheran Hymnal. It has also since appeared in Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal as hymn 437...”

- <https://blogs.lcms.org/2017/lcms-worship-hymn-of-the-day-studies-for-lent-three-year-one-year-lectionary/>

TLH 319, “In Thee alone. O Christ, My Lord” was translated by Arthur T. Russell in 1851. He was... an Independent or Congregational minister ... His first appearance as a hymn writer was in the 3rd edition of the hymn-book published by his father (1st ed. 1813), and known amongst Congregationalists as Russet's Appendix... In 1867 he removed to Wrockwardine Wood, Shropshire, where he remained until 1874, when he... died after a long and distressing illness, on the 18th of November, 1874. In his earlier years he was an extreme High Churchman, but by the study of St. Augustine his views were changed and he became, and continued to the end, a moderate Calvinist... His translations on the whole are vigorous and strong, but somewhat ultra-faithful to the original metres, &c.

- [https://hymnary.org/person/Russell\\_AT](https://hymnary.org/person/Russell_AT)

“Gilbert E Doan ,translator (of LSB 972), born 1930 was educated at Harvard University (BA 1942); Lutheran Theological Seminary (BD 1955); the University of Pennsylvania (MA 1962, though he returned it to the school to protest their policies); and Wagner College (DD, late 1970s). He served as a campus pastor in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1955-61); Northeastern Di-

rector of the National Lutheran Campus Ministry; and pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion, Philadelphia (1984-95)..."

- [https://hymnary.org/text/i\\_trust\\_o\\_christ\\_in\\_you\\_alone](https://hymnary.org/text/i_trust_o_christ_in_you_alone)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kK0uwvAHA6U> Andrew Remillard  
Piano from TLH 319
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eT3-QRxEY> Instrumental

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001  
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O.T.– “look, you **blind...** Who is **blind...**Who is **blind ...** or **blind** ”

Psalm – “I cry out ...plead ...pour ... tell ... walk...Cry... say...may give thanks.”

Epistle – “at one time you were darkness, but now you are light... ”

Gospel – “**You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.** ”

**Isaiah 42:14-21; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), 1 Samuel 16:1-13 (Next week: Ezekiel 37:1-14; RCL, the same reading)**

*“The final verse of the pericope governs our use of it and its context in chapter 42. The Lord takes pleasure (חפצ)—he gets a kick out of—placing his instruction, the script of the conversation he wishes to have with his human creatures (תורה), before them. He does so in accord with his righteousness. Preaching on this text will be framed by our need to be listening to the Lord and to be acknowledging and basking in his righteousness (צדקה), his being the way he is, compassionate, merciful, fatherly...”*

- <https://concordiatheology.org/2014/03/lent-4-isaiah-4214-21-march-30-2014/> Robert Kolb “Robert Kolb is a professor emeritus of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. His major contributions include an edition of the Book of Concord as well as an introductory book of Lutheran theology. Kolb is also the director of the Institute for Mission Studies in St. Louis.[1] He spends much time teaching in various locations around the world including Estonia; India; Oberursel, Germany; and Cambridge, England.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Kolb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Kolb)

## The LORD's Chosen Servant Verses 1-9

### Sing to the LORD a New Song Verse 10 -17

<sup>14</sup> For a long time **I have** held my peace;  
**I have** kept still and restrained myself;  
now **I will** cry out like a woman in labor;

**I will** gasp and pant.

<sup>15</sup> **I will** lay waste mountains and hills,  
and dry up all their vegetation;

**I will** turn the rivers into islands,<sup>[a]</sup>  
and dry up the pools.

<sup>16</sup> And **I will** lead the blind  
in a way that they do not know,  
in paths that they have not known  
**I will** guide them.

**I will** turn the darkness before them into light,  
the rough places into level ground.

These are the things **I do**,  
and **I do** not forsake them.

<sup>17</sup> They are turned back and utterly put to shame,  
who trust in carved idols,  
who say to metal images,  
“You are our gods.”

### **Israel's Failure to Hear and See Verses 18-25**

<sup>18</sup> Hear, you deaf,  
and look, you **blind**, that you may see!

<sup>19</sup> Who is **blind** but my servant,  
or deaf as my messenger whom I send?

Who is **blind** as my dedicated one,<sup>[b]</sup>  
or **blind** as the servant of the LORD?

<sup>20</sup> He sees many things, but does not observe them;  
his ears are open, but he does not hear.

<sup>21</sup> The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness' sake,  
to magnify his law and make it glorious.

a. [Isaiah 42:15](#) Or *into coastlands*

b. [Isaiah 42:19](#) Or *as the one at peace with me*

### **Look, You Blind, and See!** (A sermon based on Isaiah 42:14-21)

Can you imagine being both blind and deaf? How hard would it be to communicate! Can you imagine being the parent of a child that's both blind and deaf? How would you discipline? The truth is that by nature, and too often *still*, we are blind to see what God has done for us in his grace. We're deaf to hear his Word. So what does God do? In love he opens our eyes and gives us new, spiritual, sight and opens our ears to hear his Word. Read or listen to ([download](#) or [stream](#)) this sermon based on Isaiah 42:14-21 and be encouraged to look and see, listen and hear!

Most of you are probably familiar with the story of Helen Keller. When Helen was only a few months old a disease left her both blind and deaf. And isolated from everything that was going on around her, she became a little brat. She would eat food off of anyone's plate, she would scream and shout, smash dishes and lamps, and in short be a little terror. Relatives thought she was a monster and encouraged her parents to put her in an institution...

In our sermon text for this morning, God speaks of his nation Israel, who was about to go into captivity in Babylon for their rebellion against God, as if they were just like Helen Keller. They too were blind and deaf. They were blind to all of God's loving acts he had done for them. They were deaf to hear his Word. And what could God do if they didn't listen?...

### I. The Reason for Blindness

Just like Helen Keller: Blind and deaf. That's the way God described the Israelites in today's text by referring to them as "God's servant." *"Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the servant of the LORD?"* "No one is as blind as the Israelites!" But what made them so blind and deaf? *"You have seen many things, but have paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing."* It wasn't the fact that they *couldn't* hear or see, but that they *wouldn't* see or hear. They had selective hearing...

They chose not to *see* his loving hand in rescuing them from Egypt, in providing for them in the wilderness, in bringing them safely to the Promised Land, in driving out their enemies, in blessing them in their new homes. Instead of thanking him, they grumbled and complained against him. They focused their sights on what they *didn't* have: "We had onions in Egypt!" they whined! "This water in the desert is too bitter!" they grumbled! "We're sick of this manna and quail, manna and quail!" they complained!

They choose not to *hear* God's law and to ignore his commands not to worship other so-called gods, and worshiped a cow made out of gold that they themselves formed! And instead of rejoicing in the blessings God had given—especially in the promise of the Savior—they chose to remain blind and deaf. Ah, those foolish Israelites!...

### II. The Cure for Blindness

For Helen Keller, the cure came in a peculiar way... But, when the patient young teacher, Anne Sullivan, led her to the water pump, all of that was about to change...

In a more miraculous way God gave the Israelites a different kind of sight—spiritual sight—and a new ability to hear him and listen to his voice. He wouldn't let them remain blind and deaf, so he let them suffer in captivity to turn them back to him. But God didn't want them to suffer *long*. It pained him to see them under his discipline and he was eager to deliver them from their suffering... It hurt God to see his people hurt—even if it was from the selective blindness and selective hearing they chose for themselves—and so, God would act...

God would not forsake his people. He would bring them back to the light by rekindling their faith in him and his promises and by leading a remnant back to the Promised Land. Why would God do this? Because *"It pleased the LORD for the sake of his righteousness..."* It had nothing to do with the worthiness of the Israelites or because they were more righteous than the Babylonian. God did it for the sake of *his* righteousness—simply because he was and is a righteous and gracious God. That's just who he is. ..."

➤ <http://gracelutherankenai.blogspot.com/2011/03/look-you-blind-and-see-sermon-based-on.html> Pastor Rob Guenther Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kenai, Alaska

Isaiah can be a difficult and complicated book. For instance this week has numerous references to "I". The question is, who is "I"? Is the answer "the servant"? Is the servant a person from the time of Isaiah, a person in the future of Israel or a reference to Jesus. Quite often the answer is "Yes" to all of the above. Since as Lutheran's we are firm in our belief to use Scripture to interpret Scripture use the references below to see how that works for two key phrases, "long time" and "well".

**Isaiah 42:14** (King James Version)

I have **long time** holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and **devour** at once.

**long time**

[Job 32:18](#) [Job 32:20](#) ; [Psalms 50:2](#) ; [Psalms 83:1](#) [Psalms 83:2](#) [Ecclesiastes 8:11](#) [Ecclesiastes 8:12](#) ; [Jeremiah 15:6](#) ; [44:22](#) [Luke 18:7](#)  
[2 Peter 3:9](#) [2 Peter 3:10](#) [2 Peter 3:15](#)

**Isaiah 42:21** (King James Version)

The LORD is **well** pleased for his righteousness' sake; **he will** magnify the law, and make **it** honourable.

**well**

[1:24-27](#) [Isaiah 46:12](#) [Isaiah 46:13](#) [Psalms 71:16](#) [Psalms 71:19](#) ; [85:9-12](#) [Daniel 9:24-27](#) ; [Matthew 3:17](#) ; [5:17](#)  
[Matthew 17:5](#) ; [John 8:29](#) ; [15:10](#) [Romans 3:25](#) [Romans 3:26](#) ; [2 Corinthians 5:19-21](#) ; [Philippians 3:9](#)

**he will**

[Psalms 40:8](#) ; [Matthew 3:15](#) ; [5:17-20](#) [Romans 3:31](#) ; [7:12](#) [Romans 8:3](#) [Romans 8:4](#) [10:4](#)  
[Galatians 3:13](#) [Galatians 3:21](#)  
[Galatians 5:22](#) [Galatians 5:23](#) ; [Hebrews 8:10](#) ; [1 John 3:4](#) [1 John 3:5](#)

**it**

Hebrew or, him.

[John 13:31](#) [John 13:32](#) ; [John 17:4](#) [John 17:5](#)

➤ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/treasury-of-scripture-knowledge/isaiah-42-14.html>

**Psalm 142; RCL, Psalm 23 (Psalm 130; RCL, the same reading)**

*This Maschil (**maskil**) is written for our instruction. It teaches us principally by example how to order our prayer in times of distress. Such instruction is among the most needful, practical, and effectual parts of our spiritual education. He who has learned how to pray has been taught the most useful of the arts and sciences. The disciples said unto the Son of David,*

"Lord, teach, us to pray"; and here David gives us a valuable lesson by recording his own experience as to supplication from beneath a cloud.

*A Prayer when he was in the cave. He was in one of his many lurking places, either Engedi, Adullam, or some other lone cavern wherein he could conceal himself from Saul and his blood hounds. Caves make good closets for prayer; their gloom and solitude are helpful to the exercise of devotion. Had David prayed as much in his palace as he did in his cave, he might never have fallen into the act which brought such misery upon his later days...There can be little doubt that this song dates from the days when Saul was sorely persecuting David, and David himself was in soul trouble, probably produced by that weakness of faith which led him to associate with heathen princes. His fortunes were evidently at their lowest, and, what was worse, his repute had fearfully fallen; yet he displayed a true faith in God, to whom he made known his pressing sorrows. The gloom of the cave is over the psalm, and yet as if standing at the mouth of it the prophet poet sees a bright light a little beyond..."*

- <https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=spur&b=19&c=142>  
Charles H. Spurgeon's Treasury of David

## **You Are My Refuge**

### **A Maskil<sup>[a]</sup> of David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer.**

**142** With my voice **I cry out** to the LORD;  
with my voice **I plead** for mercy to the LORD.

**2 I pour** out my complaint before him;  
**I tell** my trouble before him.

**3** When my spirit faints within me,  
you know my way!

In the path where **I walk**  
they have hidden a trap for me.

**4** Look to the right and see:  
there is none who takes notice of me;  
no refuge remains to me;  
no one cares for my soul.

**5 I cry** to you, O LORD;  
**I say**, "You are my refuge,  
my portion in the land of the living."

**6** Attend to my cry,  
for I am brought very low!  
Deliver me from my persecutors,  
for they are too strong for me!

**7** Bring me out of prison,



that **I may give** thanks to your name!  
 The righteous will surround me,  
 for you will deal bountifully with me.

- a. [Psalm 142:1](#) Probably a musical or liturgical term

“There are a few Psalms that do not have a title attached to them (1, 2 & 8 for example). But many do have a title which reveal something about the Psalm. Many reveal who the author was. Some reveal who the Psalm was to be derived to, the purpose for which the Psalm was written, or the musical style to which the words were to be set. I enjoy these bits of information as they contribute something to our understanding of the Psalm. But there are a handful of Psalms that have a title which reveals something of the *situation* that provoked the writing of the Psalm. Take for example of the title of Psalm 18: *“To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who addressed the words of this song to the Lord on the day when the Lord rescued him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul”*. Wow, that’s a mouthful. Or consider the title of Psalm 34: *“Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away”*. That was an interesting moment in David’s life! Psalm 51 is delivered to us with this heading: *“To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba”*. It’s no wonder that we find in this Psalm a model for true repentance. These titles are a gift to us in that they enable us to, not only enjoy the words of the Psalm itself, but to imagine the *event* or *setting* which provoked the author to write. We are able to enter into the narrative, relate the author, and feel the emotion of the soul which stirred the author to write, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The title of Psalm 142 is this: *“A Maskil [wise song, or well crafted song] of David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer”*. It should be noticed that Psalm 57 is also said to have been written by David when he was in the cave: *“To the choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy. A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.”*

I suppose we could just ignore the title and get into the Psalm itself, but how much more rich the Psalm becomes when consider the setting and seek to identify with David in his struggle...

It is very important that we notice the way that this Psalm concludes. It concludes with words of confident expectation. Verse 6: *“Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me! Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name! The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me.”* (Psalm 142:6–7, ESV)

This is a common feature of the Psalms of lament – Psalm 142 being that type of Psalm. Psalms of lament express sorrow. They are songs of disorientation, sung by those who are in distress. But most of them (not all; Ps. 88, 143) take a surprising turn near the end as the Psalmist moves from complaint to an expression of confident expectation.



This expression of joy, or expression of confidence, is subtle in Psalm 142, but it is there. Notice how David declares at the end of verse 7, *"The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me."...*

- <http://emmausrbc.org/2015/07/12/sermon-psalm-142-when-the-soul-is-troubled/>  
Joe Anady, Elder, Emmaus Reformed Baptist Church, Hemet, California

### **Ephesians 5:8-14; RCL, the same reading (Romans 8:1-11; RCL, Romans 8:6-11)**

*"In the midst of a group of complex lessons (not in sequence) from Romans, this pericope from Ephesians suddenly appears.*

*It accompanies the dramatic Johannine story of the man healed of blindness (John 9:1-41). The first reading (1 Samuel 16:1-13) tells the story of God's choice of David as a young boy to be king of Israel. This lesson might not be the obvious choice for preaching, but it amply rewards the one who takes it up.*

*First and foremost, this passage is about the present lives to the people to whom it was addressed. Loaded with verbs in the imperative moods, verses 10 and 11 begin with commands to baptized believers. "Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord," on the one hand and "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness," on the other are the two identical callings of Christians. For those concerned that kind of language does not proclaim the gospel, rejoice. The first verse, the rubric for engaging this particular passage, declares clearly and firmly that once the hearers were children of darkness, but now in the Lord (note: not by their own power), the hearers are "children of light." This entire passage is about what that means for daily life. Perhaps, Lent is a good time to consider that question, phrased cogently in Luke's narrative, "How then shall we live?"*

*"Live," says Ephesians, "as children of light." (v.8)..." (continued after the reading)*

### **Walk in Love Verses 1-21**

*<sup>7</sup> Therefore do not become partners with them;\* <sup>8</sup> for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup> and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,*

*"Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you."....*

### **Wives and Husbands Verses 22-33**

“In exhortations to live as children of the light, these children are expected to care for one another as family. Not just any family at that. The body of Christians and especially the church, is called to "speak the truth in love" as a means to grow and as a goal for growing (4:15). Only in this way do we mature into the body of Christ we are enabled to be. Therefore, we pay attention, listen to one another, seek one another's well-being--even those who do not "deserve" this kind of attention.

This life style is not a mystery. Its been described in all kinds of literature from poetry to self-help to the Bible over and over again. We know what it looks like, even if only in glimpses. I wonder why it is so hard to trust that such life together is a gift from God rather than a demand. For truly, when we are told in Ephesians (4:7) that "each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift," we know that the grace is for something, for salvation, for being knit together, for growth in truth-telling with love, for living awake, children of light, for gratitude to God.

Thanks be to God for this vision, this home for all our yearnings, and the gift of grace to know it in Christ Jesus.”

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=30](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=30)  
[Sarah Henrich](#) Professor Emeritus of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

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“To begin reading in verse 8 is to pick up in the midst of Paul’s thought. Since verse 3, he has been talking about the habits of life they should *not* practice -- impurity, greed, coarse speech -- and harshly reminding them those whose lives are characterized by such things do not have an inheritance from God but instead an expectation of God’s wrath. Do not, Paul says, be fellow participants with people who do such things. This is the background that leads to his dualistic statement in verse 8 about darkness and light. It is rather striking in its succinct comprehensiveness: formerly, you were darkness, and now (understood “you are”) light. Not that they are *in* darkness or light, but these descriptors are fitting to their very identity...

The transformation happens because now they are “in the Lord.” Since Christ is a source of light -- he is the one who shines upon them (Ephesians 5:14) -- and they are now in him, it follows that they can now be called children of light. This is closely related to the earlier statement in verse 1 that they should imitate God because they are in his family...”

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3197](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3197)  
[Amy L.B. Peeler](#) Associate Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill.

**John 9:1-41 or John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39; RCL, John 9:1-41 (John 11:1-45 (46-53) or John 11:17-27, 38-53; RCL, John 11:1-45)**

*“This week's text is another in a series of encounters with Jesus in John with this one focused, along with the Old Testament text, on seeing rightly.*

*Blindness and sight are explicitly mentioned in 24 of the chapter's 41 verses, including the first and last ones. The details of the miracle itself are repeated four times -- that Jesus put mud on the eyes of the blind man and then he regained his sight. At the center of the narrative,*

standing before the healing and eternally after it, is Jesus, the giver of sight and the very light of the world in which true sight becomes possible.

The story is linked thematically to the Feast of Tabernacles, which is the setting for chapters 7 and 8. The Pool of Siloam, where the man born blind is sent to wash his eyes, figured in water ceremonies at the festival, and Jesus has already invited the thirsty to come to him and drink on the great day of the festival in 7:37-38. Light was also an important theme, and Jesus declares himself the light of the world at the festival in 8:12 and again here in 9:5.

Underlying the discussion of light and sight and blindness is a question about who Jesus is, the question that stretches across all the Lenten texts..."

- [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=906](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=906)  
[Meda Stamper](#) Leicestershire, England

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"If you follow the Gospel of John closely, for the first time in the Gospel, here Jesus himself doesn't appear in the foreground. He appears in vv1-7, then returns in v35. The events certainly pivot on Jesus, who becomes like the mountain range behind the foreground scenes. But the main character becomes this blind man, in whom the works of God are revealed..."

- <https://stmarks.edu.au/review-article/john-9-1-17-blindness/>  
St Mark's Theological Centre "is a scholarly Christian theological community serving Australian society since 1957. We are passionate about the practical connection of theological principles to public and private life while championing intellectual rigour in the pursuit of academic excellence."

## "The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 9th Chapter"

### Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

9 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, **"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; 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> Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud <sup>7</sup> and said to him, **"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam"** (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

<sup>8</sup> The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup> Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." <sup>10</sup> So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" <sup>11</sup> He

*answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." <sup>12</sup> They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."*

<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup> So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

<sup>18</sup> The Jews<sup>[a]</sup> 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 <sup>19</sup> and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup> (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus<sup>[b]</sup> to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) <sup>23</sup> Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

<sup>24</sup> So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." <sup>26</sup> They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> 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?" <sup>28</sup> And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. <sup>32</sup> Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, **“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”**<sup>36</sup> He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, **“You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.”** <sup>38</sup> He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, **“For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”** <sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, **“If you were blind, you would have no guilt;<sup>d</sup> but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.**

- a. [John 9:18](#) Greek *loudaioi* probably refers here to Jewish religious leaders, and others under their influence, in that time; also verse [22](#)
- b. [John 9:22](#) Greek *him*
- c. [John 9:35](#) Some manuscripts *the Son of God*
- d. [John 9:41](#) Greek *you would not have sin*

### **“This is the Gospel of the Lord”**    **“Praise to You, O Christ”**

“Some passages are simply too rich to be only heard. They need to be experienced. Such is the case with this week's story of the man born blind in John 9.

So here's my proposition. This reading is all about sight, particularly, seeing as a metaphor for believing. Words for blindness, sight, seeing, and so forth crop up 24 times in this 41-verse story. But let's be clear, "seeing" isn't only a metaphor. The man born blind really can't see. And when he regains his sight his life is literally transformed. So what would it be like to give folks a physical experience of both not seeing and seeing?

As I've said before when we've engaged in these kinds of "participatory-preaching" experiments, you'll know what will be most effective in your own context better than I. But in order to prime the pump, here are a few suggestions: You could prepare simple blindfolds -- strips of cloth -- that people would wear during part or all of the reading of this story. (Alternatively and more simply, of course, folks could just close their eyes, but I think there's something about being physically inhibited from seeing that would be valuable to experience.) You could either have all the people not be able to see for the whole reading, or have some groups remove their blindfolds at certain parts -- perhaps folks can number off by three and 1) some can see the whole time, 2) some are blindfolded and regain sight when the man born blind does, and 3) some be kept from seeing for the whole story.

What is it like to experience the story in this way?..."

- <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=1583>

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\*"The term "Laetare Sunday" is used by most Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, particularly those with Latin liturgical traditions. The word comes from the Latin *laetare*, the singular imperative of *laetari*: "to rejoice"...

"*Lætare Jerusalem: et conventum facite omnes qui diligitis eam: gaudete cum lætitia, qui in tristitia fuistis: ut exsultetis, et satiemini ab uberibus consolationis vestræ.*

"Rejoice, O Jerusalem: and come together all you that love her: rejoice with joy, you that have been in sorrow: that you may exult and be filled from the breasts of your consolation.

This Sunday is currently also known as Mothering Sunday, Refreshment Sunday, mid-Lent Sunday (in French *mi-carême*) and Rose Sunday (either because the golden rose (sent by Popes to Catholic sovereigns) used to be blessed at this time, or because the use of rose-colored (rather than violet) vestments was permitted on this day).

Historically, the day was also known as "the Sunday of the Five Loaves," from the story of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Before the adoption of the modern "common lectionaries", this narrative was the traditional Gospel reading for this Sunday in Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Old Catholic churches. (*John 6:1–15, One Year Lectionary*)

In Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Old Catholic churches flowers may appear on the high altar and the organ may be played as a solo instrument. Priests are given the option to wear rose-colored vestments at Mass held on this day in place of the violet vestments normally worn during Lent.<sup>[2]</sup> The term "rose" is used to describe this lighter shade of the color violet in the Roman Rite.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Sunday is considered a day of relaxation from normal Lenten rigours; a day of hope with Easter at last within sight. Traditionally, weddings (otherwise banned during Lent) could be performed on this day,<sup>[4]</sup> and servants were released from service for the day to visit their mothers (hence 'Mothering Sunday').

Laetare Sunday is exactly 21 days before Easter Sunday, a moveable feast based on the cycles of the moon. The date can be any between 1 March and 4 April inclusive; occurrence in April is considered to be uncommon; the last occurrence was on 3 April 2011 and the next will be on 4 April 2038, after which it will not occur again until 1 April 2057... "

➤ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laetare\\_Sunday](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laetare_Sunday) Site contains all Laetare Sunday dates for 2019-2100

How are you doing with **The Matthew Challenge?**