

4th Sunday in Lent + 15 March 2026 + I Samuel 16:1-13a + Eph 5:8-14 + Jn 9:1-41

I think most of us are familiar with the famous old hymn “Amazing Grace”. This hymn was published in 1779, and even though it has its origins in the Anglican Church, Catholics still sing it at almost every funeral, nearly 250 years after it was written. So what gives this hymn such “staying power”, and what does this have to do with our Gospel today?

Well, the closing words of the 1st verse of *Amazing Grace* are taken from the parable of the Prodigal Son as well as the story of the man born blind in our Gospel today, and they go like this: *Amazing Grace/how sweet the sound/that saved a wretch like me/I once was lost/but now am found/was blind but now I see*. If we stop to ponder these words, we realize that they form a prayer of deep humility before God. So much so, that some strongly object to the phrase *that saved a wretch like me*. But according to Webster, ‘wretched’ means afflicted, or extremely miserable. And as the parable of the prodigal son makes abundantly clear, when we are distant from the Father, our life is indeed “wretched”.

Think of the poor man born blind in our Gospel today. Blindness is a terrible thing. True, it always could be worse, and blind people certainly can live happy lives. But let’s not gloss over the fact that no one would ever *want* to be blind. To never see your parents, your siblings, the beauty of creation, you name it, would be an immense loss. And yet our Gospel reveals today that there is another kind of blindness that is even worse than visual blindness: that is, blindness of heart: the absolute worst kind of “wretchedness.”

In fact, all of us are born with this blindness. We are born with original sin, which skews our vision from seeing reality as it really is. If left to our own devices, we quickly come to see God as our competitor, our adversary, or even worse, believe that God does not even exist. And the only way we can be cured of this blindness is to follow the path of our Gospel today: to admit our blindness when Christ calls out to us, to ask for healing, and then obey Jesus’ instructions for how to be healed. And just as this man obeyed and washed in the pool of Siloam for healing, we too begin the healing of our spiritual blindness in the waters of Baptism—the Sacrament of our faith in Christ. But baptism is only just the beginning.

And here’s the catch: our vision is not made perfect all at once: salvation is a process, not a one-and-done thing. Coming to see reality with the eyes of faith is a process that requires daily conversion. John Newton, the man who wrote *Amazing Grace*, had a profound religious experience in 1748. But he still engaged in the slave trade for many years until he finally came to see rightly: that all people, no matter what we look like, are made in God’s image and likeness, and thus are equal in dignity, and must therefore be treated with love. Upon gaining true vision, John Newton admitted: [my past] *will always be a subject of humiliating reflection to me; that I was once an active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders*. That change of heart, change of vision, is the power of grace.

Amazing Grace came from the heart of a man who came to see the true, shocking cost of mercy: that God can forgive someone for sins even as heinous as slave trade. In our culture today, there are some who might say we shouldn't sing *Amazing Grace* because of its author's past. But we need to be very careful here. While we correctly seek to right wrongs of the past and seek accountability, we also must be willing to forgive. And that's not always an easy line to walk. But the truth is every person is guilty of sin, and according to strict justice, deserves to be 'canceled,' so to speak. But God doesn't desire cancellation; what He wants is conversion. And a big part of coming to see correctly is admitting our sin and our need for a Savior. Only then can God truly open our eyes to His divine mercy.

In the Gospels, Jesus' harshest words are reserved for the Pharisees, because many of the Pharisees were unwilling to allow the Lord to purify the 'eyes of their hearts.' They were so quick to point out others' sins, but couldn't see their own. So Jesus tells them in our Gospel today, *If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains.* Contrary to what they believed, physical blindness is not caused by personal sin. But spiritual blindness is. And if we cannot admit our own dare I say 'wretchedness' before God, we will never truly be able to see. As our 1st reading says today, *Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance, but the LORD looks into the heart.*

So how do we come to see as God does? Well, as we said before, Baptism is the first step in coming to see rightly. Unfortunately, I think many people think of Baptism as a nice ritual that we do for babies. But to be 'baptized' literally means to be immersed. So to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit means to be literally *immersed* in God: to be with Him, to listen to Him, to study His ways, to make Him the center of your life, or even better, to realize you have no life outside of His life. To see as He sees.

As I mentioned last week, this is week 2 of the 3-week long part of Lent known as the "securities," where the Gospels make an important revelation about who Jesus is. Today, He reveals Himself to be the "light of the world," as he removes the darkness of one man's life both literally and spiritually. Literally, by giving him the gift of sight. Spiritually, by helping the man to profess faith in Jesus: *I do believe Lord, he says, and worshipped Him.*

And so perhaps our takeaway this week is to ask the Lord to reveal to us any place where we are still in the dark: maybe it's willed a lack of faith, a prejudice held, or a refusal to forgive. Whatever the case, we pray that the Lord will give us the courage of the man born blind to admit our blindness, so that He can heal our sight—to see that Jesus truly *is* the Son of God—so that we can *live as children of the light*, as St. Paul calls us in our 2nd reading today. And we also beg the Lord for the courage of this same man to not be afraid to proclaim, even in a hostile world, his most beautiful testimony to the Good News: "I may not have all the answers in life, but *One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.*"