

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Fourth Sunday in Lent**  
**Gospel Lesson for Adults**

**Scripture: John 9:1-41**

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

**A Notation for This Week’s Gospel**

A man born blind, and a healing that placed the authorities at risk: How does the way we look at things affect our capacity to see?

**Theme: Searching for Sight**

**Before Class:** Make sure to have enough copies of the scripture for today for everyone to read. The reading is long, so it will be easier for people to have a copy they can either write on or paper on which to take notes as they follow along in their Bibles.

**Beginning:** Invite the group to consider this statement: How does our ability to look at things affect our ability to see? How did the Pharisees see the observance of the Sabbath? (For the origins of that concept, see Genesis 2:2-3.) Invite the group to notice both what people can see and what they are unable to see in this passage and be thinking of times we can see and times we cannot.

**Opening Prayer:** We pray, God, for eyes to see what you call us to notice. Amen.

**The Scripture. John 9:1-41** Describe to the group the method you have selected for reading this passage and then ask for volunteers to read the parts.

**Questions:**

- (Briefly) I wonder what stood out for you in this passage?

**Verses 1-12**

- To what extent do you think the disciples’ question (verse 2b) catalyzed Jesus’ decision to heal the man born blind? (Perhaps he realized that it would create “cognitive dissonance” for the Pharisees and maybe even help them see.)
- I wonder why Jesus chose this method of healing? (Spittle was considered to have medicinal value.)
- Contemporary medicine has within its bag of competencies surgery that can cure some forms of blindness, so a person regaining sight might be less of a startling revelation for us than it was for the man’s neighbors. How do we think we might respond if we discovered that a person who had been missing a limb, suddenly had that limb?

- Why doesn't the man "know" who healed him? (The man had been unable to "see" Jesus when Jesus healed him.)

### **Verses 13-23**

- Track the path the Pharisees take to try to disprove either that this healing took place, or that it took place on a Sabbath so the breaking of the rule trumps the event.
- Who do they interrogate first? (The man who has received his sight.)
- What about the man's testimony puts them on the spot? (Verse 16)
- What do they do next in hopes of finding an answer they can live with? (They interview the man's terrified parents.)
- I wonder why the parents so afraid of these questions? (Verse 22)
- What is their creative solution to these compromising questions? (Verse 23b)

### **Verses 24-34**

- Notice the mounting frustration of the Pharisees as they attempt to trap the man who now can see, and his ability to sidestep the questions. What do the Pharisees do to try to trap the man who now can see? (Verse 24b)
- How does the man switch the focus? (Verse 25)
- Notice the apparent growth of the man's faith as he is badgered by the questions. (Verse 33)

### **Verses 35-41**

- Notice the contrast between the Pharisees' and Jesus' gentle line of questions to the man. What is happening to the man in verses 35 to 38? (Jesus' questions allow the man to "see" for himself who Jesus is.)
- Describe how Jesus' concluding remarks to the Pharisees clarify who it is that sees and who is now blind. (Verses 39b-41)

**Getting Closure:** Invite the group to consider times we have been blind and later could see. For example, at one point in our history our church was blind to the injustices of segregation and now few would argue that African Americans should attend separate schools from others. Where else has blindness opened to seeing? Then, invite the group to sit in silence: to be still and know that God is.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, for invitations to see. Help us to see things anew each day, seeing people how you see people. Amen.

## **John 9:1-41**

**Narrator:** As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him,

**Disciples:** ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’

**Jesus:** Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’

**Narrator:** When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him,

**Jesus:** ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’

**Narrator:** (which means Sent) Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask,

**Neighbors:** ‘Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?’

**Narrator:** Some were saying, ‘It is he.’ Others were saying, ‘No, but it is someone like him.’ But the man kept saying,

**Blind Man:** ‘I am the man.’

**Neighbors:** ‘Then how were your eyes opened?’

**Blind Man:** ‘The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, “Go to Siloam and wash.” Then I went and washed and received my sight.’

**Neighbors:** ‘Where is he?’

**Blind Man:** ‘I do not know.’

**Narrator:** They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them,

**Blind Man:** ‘He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.’

**Narrator:** Some of the Pharisees said,

**Pharisees (Group 1):** ‘This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.’

**Narrators:** But others said,

**Pharisees (Group 2):** ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?’

**Narrator:** And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man,

**Pharisees (all):** ‘What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.’

**Blind Man:** ‘He is a prophet.’

**Narrator:** The Jews 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,

**Pharisees:** ‘Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?’

**Narrator:** His parents answered,

**Parents:** ‘We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.’

**Narrator:** His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, ‘He is of age; ask him.’ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him,

**Pharisees:** ‘Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.’

**Blind Man:** ‘I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.’

**Pharisees:** ‘What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?’

**Blind Man:** ‘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?’

**Narrator:** Then they reviled him, saying,

**Pharisees:** ‘You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.’

**Blind Man:** ‘Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.’

**Pharisees:** ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?’

**Narrator:** And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’<sup>36</sup> He answered, ‘And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.’<sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.’<sup>38</sup> He said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshipped him.<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, ‘I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.’<sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, ‘Surely we are not blind, are we?’<sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, “We see”, your sin remains.

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