

*Fourth Sunday in Lent*  
*March 15, 2026*  
*Text: John 9:1-41*  
*The Rev. David B. Hodges*

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

*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.* I believe that most of you will recognize those words that are part of what is considered to be one of the greatest hymns of all time, *Amazing Grace*. As I begin this sermon, I invite you to take a hymnal and turn to *Amazing Grace* which is hymn number 671. Let's sing the first verse together.

. It is said that *Amazing Grace* is a hymn that almost everyone knows. Many people love it and find great comfort in it, and without a doubt it is one of the most requested hymns to be sung at funerals. It is a hymn that has been used at many significant national events, and it is estimated that it is sung around 10 million times a year. Steve Turner is a music journalist who was asked why *Amazing Grace* has proved to be so enduring and he says, *I was lost and now I'm found, I was blind and now I see – I mean, it's an experience most people can relate to* (“The Story of Amazing Grace,” Ramy Inocenio, 12/25/22, CBS News)/

Ironically, though *Amazing Grace* became a hymn that was widely used in the civil rights movement in this country, it was written by an English ship captain named John Newton who was involved in slave trading. The first line of the hymn, that we just sang, *amazing grace! how sweet the sound. That saved a wretch like me!* came from Newton's experience as a slave trader and from a near death experience he had at sea during a violent storm. After that storm Newton had a spiritual conversion that led him to become a priest

and later, he became an abolitionist who wrote the words of *Amazing Grace* as part of a sermon he preached. The hymn wasn't particularly popular in England but began to be used in the 1800's in this country and has only gained popularity since then. James Basker is a historian who says that the music and lyrics of *Amazing Grace* are appealing because *it's just about that thing that human beings share, which is pain...We are able to imagine, and to yearn for, joy and peace — for relief from the miseries of this world.*" ("The Complicated Story Behind *Amazing Grace*," Julia Franz and Trey Kay, 4/21/17).

*As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. When [Jesus] 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, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Then he went and washed and came back able to see* (John 9:1-7).

*I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.* That line, written by John Newton, echoes the theme of the bible story that we just listened to about how Jesus healed a blind man. It is an unusually long story that makes up an entire chapter in the book of John. It is a story about darkness and blindness, and it is a story filled with questions about Jesus and the miracle he performed when he enabled someone who had been blind since birth to be able to see. When Jesus encounters the blind man, his disciples ask an important question about him that revolves around their belief that there must be a connection between sin and sickness. *Who sinned*, the disciples want to know, what it *this man or his parents?* (John 9:2) But what Jesus says in reply is something they haven't heard before. *Neither this man nor his parents sinned*, Jesus says, *but this happened so*

*that the work of God might be displayed in his life* (John 9:3).

It is at this point, that Jesus mixes dirt and saliva, puts it on the man's eyes and tells him to go wash in a pool. With that, this man who has never been able to see, is no longer blind. Now that is all there is to the part of the story that tells about the miracle that Jesus performed. What follows in this lengthy story are a series of exchanges between the man, his neighbors, his parents and a group of religious leaders called Pharisees and Jesus. The man's neighbors aren't exactly thrilled to when he comes around after being healed and they begin to debate about whether he is really the same person who used to beg near their homes. *How were your eyes* opened, they want to know? (John 9:10) When he tells them that Jesus did it, they take him to the Pharisees, who also don't seem happy for him but are upset because Jesus has performed this miracle on a day when the religious law prohibits this kind of thing from taking place. The man who has now been given the gift of sight has such a difficult time convincing the Pharisees that he had actually been blind just that they send for his parents. When they show up, they too have no idea how their son is now able to see. After being asked repeatedly who Jesus is and hearing the accusations made about Jesus, the man finally says, *I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see* (John 9:25).

Throughout the book of John, the term sign appears often, and it refers to things that are meant to convey certain information that point us to Jesus. While there is no consensus on the exact number of signs there are, there are at least six that represent public actions of Jesus that are meant to authenticate who he was as the Son of God. Those who first began to follow Jesus and who had contact with him saw how he healed the sick, how he was able to change water into wine at a wedding, fed thousands of people with a few loaves of bread

and some fish, brought back to life a man named Lazarus, and they witnessed what he did with a man who had been blind from birth. Because of this sign, this type of direct action of God through Jesus those who were there, and particularly the blind man, were able to see Jesus in a new way. We hear that clearly when the man who is given the ability to see says to those who are drilling him with questions, ***one thing I do know. I was blind but now I can see*** (John 9:25). Throughout the story of the life of Jesus, there are examples of how he healed those who were disabled, those who were deaf and the blind. But the signs are there only for those who will open their eyes to see. The Pharisees were intelligent, and well-intentioned religious people but they were blind. Oh sure, they could see, but what they saw didn't fit into their limited view of things or into the way in which they saw God.

Max Lucado is a well-known Christian author who talks about how much Christians love to sing Amazing Grace. ***I once was lost but now am found; was blind, but now I see. We relate to the words of the was-blind beggar***, Lucado says, because his story is our story. ***Perhaps that's why John was in no hurry to tell it.*** Lucado goes on to point out that John ***dedicated a whopping forty-one verses to depicting how Jesus found, cured, and matured the blind man. Why***, he asks? ***What Jesus did physically for the blind beggar, he desires to do spiritually for all people—to restore our sight*** ([You Are Never Alone: Trust in the Miracle of God's Presence & Power](#)).

In various ways, some which may be very apparent and in other ways that are less easy to discern, God is constantly working to heal and to repair our vision. God is always trying to get us to open our eyes. Even though we may have perfect vision, or corrected vision, we are often blind. All of us are visually impaired but with a blindness that cannot

be changed anything we wear or with medical treatments. There is only one thing that can and will allow us to see and that is the same thing the blind man experienced, the grace of God. When we are able to really see we understand that God's grace prevails over any law, any structure, any organization, any church.

Barbara Brown Taylor describes it well when she says, *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. Maybe that is how grace works, but... it seems equally possible that the grace I need will come to me in the dark, where I too may learn to see the celestial brightness that has nothing to do with sight* ("Light Without Sight," The Christian Century, 4/2/14).

When we are able to see we understand that it is because of Jesus that we can offer to others what he so graciously made available through the miracle of sight he gave to those who were blind, the way in which he lived his life, in the way in which he died, in the way in which he then rose from the dead. The love and abiding sense of hope that is Jesus is what brings sight to you and to me and to anyone who want to be able to see. *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* (Hymnal 1982, #671). May it be so for you and for me. Amen.