

I WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE

March 15, 2026

John 9:1–41 with Isaiah 42:14–21 and Ephesians 5:8–14

— INTRODUCTION —

In the 1980s, conservators began restoring the Sistine Chapel ceiling. They applied solvent to a small test patch, wiped it away, and stopped cold. Beneath five hundred years of candle soot and incense smoke, the original frescoes were blazing—vivid greens, lapis blues, reds so bright they almost seem to vibrate. For nearly five centuries, art historians had assumed that Michelangelo painted in dark, somber tones. They wrote books about it. They built entire theories of his inner life around it.

The darkness was never his design. It was just dirt. Very old dirt that everybody had learned to call the masterpiece. That is precisely what has happened to us.

— THE FATHER’S GOOD AND RIGHTEOUS WILL —

Paul writes to the Ephesians with almost startling directness: “For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.” This is the Father’s design for His sons and daughters—not a suggestion, not an aspiration, but a declaration of what we are and therefore how we are to live. We were made in the colors of His holiness. We are heirs destined to reign with Christ over all creation. His command is that we love Him with everything we have and love our neighbor as ourselves. We are called to be people who can actually see—who look at the world and at the person in front of us with the clarity of His truth.

Isaiah 42 gives us the same vision from the other direction: God Himself, speaking like a woman finally breaking her long silence in labor, says He will lead the blind by roads they have never walked. He will turn their darkness into light. That is His mission. And by grace, it is ours.

— OUR OBJECT AND MISERABLE FAILURE —

Now look at the soot we have accumulated.

In John 9, Jesus heals a man who has been blind since birth. It is one of the most astonishing acts of mercy in all of Scripture. And the religious establishment’s response is to open an investigation. They haul the man before a council. They question his parents. They call Jesus a sinner. They have perfect physical vision and cannot see a miracle of God standing

right in front of them. Jesus' verdict on them is devastating: "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

Isaiah had named it centuries earlier: "Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send?"

The people most entrusted with the light of God's Word are the ones most capable of going stone blind to what it actually says.

Think about the French High Command in the spring of 1940. They had the Maginot Line—hundreds of miles of reinforced concrete, artillery installations, underground tunnels, everything. They looked at it and felt secure. What they never seriously considered was that the German army would simply drive its Panzer divisions through the Ardennes forest to the north, a route the French military had classified as "impassable." Within six weeks, France had fallen. They were not underprepared. They were looking in the wrong direction, completely confident they were not.

We do this with our souls. We construct a very tidy spiritual Maginot Line—Sunday attendance, a certain way of speaking, a list of things we do not do—and we look at it and feel reasonably secure. But the back door of the heart stands wide open. The resentment we nurse toward a family member because the wound is old and we have decided it is now a permanent feature of who we are. The greed we have given a more respectable name. The private sin we have managed so carefully that we have stopped being shocked by it. The neighbor whose suffering we could engage but find it more comfortable to have opinions about.

We are not the healed man in this story. We are, far more often, the Pharisees. We have his Scriptures. We have his liturgy. And we can use all of it to keep ourselves at a safe distance from the God who is standing right in front of us.

Isaiah says it plainly: they see many things, but do not observe. Their ears are open, but they do not hear. God's glorious law—given to display His righteousness and make it beautiful—is held in contempt by the very servants entrusted to carry it. We cannot wash this soot away ourselves. The man born blind in John 9 could do nothing for his own eyes. He sat in the dirt and waited.

— THE GOSPEL: THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD COMES DOWN —

And then Jesus walks by.

He does not hold a seminar on the theology of suffering. He does not wait for the man to demonstrate readiness. He kneels in the dirt, mixes mud with His own hands—the same hands that formed Adam from the earth—and presses it against those eyes. The Creator of

the world performs a new creation on a beggar who had no credentials and made no request.

“I am the light of the world.” Not *a* light. The light.

Notice also that He heals on the Sabbath—deliberately, it seems. The institution the Pharisees had turned into a locked gate, He blows open with mercy. Religion in the hands of the blind becomes a wall that keeps the suffering outside. In the hands of Jesus, it becomes the very means of healing.

This is the Gospel in its most concentrated form: you did not find your way to the light. The light came and found you. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, stepped into this soot-covered world. He lived the life of perfect love we could not live. And on Good Friday, from noon until three in the afternoon, darkness covered the whole land. The Light of the World was plunged into the blackness of our sin and the full weight of the Father’s righteous judgment. He was forsaken so you would not be. He went into the dark so you would not have to stay there. And He did not stay dead. He rose. He ascended. He reigns.

That forgiveness is not something you receive in the abstract. It arrives through physical means, just as the blind man’s healing came through mud and water. When a called pastor speaks the words of Absolution over you—“I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”—that is not a kind sentiment. That is the voice of Christ Himself washing centuries of soot from your eyes. And when you receive His body and blood at this altar, given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins, you are not commemorating something that happened two thousand years ago. You are receiving the living, reigning King into your own body. Every debt, cancelled. The masterpiece, restored.

As the ancient hymn embedded in Ephesians says: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

— WALKING AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT —

After his healing, the man born blind was dragged before the Pharisees. They pressured him. His own parents, afraid of being expelled from the synagogue, backed away from him. He had no training, no credentials, no institutional support. And when they pressed him to recant, his answer was four words of pure, unadorned testimony:

“I was blind. Now I see.”

That is your witness. The world does not need another argument. It needs people who can say, with that same simplicity and that same certainty, what has happened to them.

Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 5 is not a guilt trip. It is an invitation back into who you actually are. Walk as children of light. The fruit of the light is goodness, righteousness, and

truth. Expose the unfruitful works of darkness—not with contempt, but with light. When you forgive the person who does not deserve it, you are exposing the works of darkness. When you give generously instead of hoarding, you are exposing the works of darkness. When you turn away from the private sin and choose instead the harder, brighter path, you are exposing the works of darkness. Not because you are afraid of punishment, but because you have been washed, fed, forgiven, and you know whose you are.

Living this way confirms your identity. It lets the Holy Spirit do what He is already trying to do—which is not make you marginally more presentable, but transform you into the actual likeness of Christ. Every time you choose the light, you are cooperating with that work rather than throwing sand in the gears.

And there is a reward. Not a reward that earns forgiveness—that is already yours, full and free. But a reward that is the Father’s pleasure over a son or daughter who has come home and is actually living like it. His approval rests on that work. And what begins here continues into eternity.

One blind man sat beside a road in Jerusalem. The Son of God stopped, knelt, and gave him back his sight. And from that moment on, that man told everyone who would listen exactly what had happened to him. The religious authorities told him to be quiet. He couldn’t. The thing was too real.

You have been given your sight. You know it’s real. Go tell someone! Amen

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in Him.

Pastor Ron Breight Christ Lutheran Church Forest Hills, Pennsylvania

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