

**3/15/26**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**  
**For Group Meetings from March 8<sup>th</sup> – March 14<sup>th</sup>**

**OUR MISSION:** As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

**Prayer of the Day:** Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:**

**Share:** How did last week's scripture (John 4:5-42) work in your life this week?

**Mission:**

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

**Hear:** John 9:1-41

**Explore Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. How many different "groups" appear in this story? Who speaks the most? Who stays silent?
2. Why did the Judeans seek out the parents of the blind man?
3. What argument does the blind man use to defend that Jesus is from God?

**Connect Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What is something you see clearly now that that you once misunderstood?
2. Have you ever experienced growth or healing that others around you didn't welcome?
3. When have you chosen safety or belonging over honesty?

**Memorize this verse:** "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5) Where have you seen light this week?

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:**

**Obey:** During this week follow through on your intentions.

**Meditate:** Meditate on Psalm 23. How does this speak into your life?

**Reflect:** What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

**Notes for ChristCare leaders:**

Why do we call the main character in this story “the man born blind” or “the man who had been blind”? Maybe you don’t call it that, but that’s the way I’ve normally heard it. And I’m curious as to why. The obvious reason, I suppose, is that this is the way the Gospel of John refers to him. At least some of the time. In the first verse of John’s ninth chapter, he is described as a “man blind from birth.” Okay, that pretty descriptively accurate. Once Jesus heals him, he is referred to directly several more times. In v. 8, he is “the man who used to beg.” In v. 13, it’s “the man who formerly had been blind.” And in v. 17, it is simply “the blind man,” as if those questioning him refuse to accept the transformation that has occurred for him. All of these designations invite us to understand him in terms of what he used to be and, notably, in terms of his limitations. Perhaps the intention is to recognize what he has overcome. But I wonder if that roots us too quickly and firmly in the past and risks defining him in terms of previous limitations. I wonder how often we do that in our lives as well. That is, define ourselves in terms of limiting factors or difficult things we’ve experienced. Even if we’ve overcome them, and take a measure of pride in that, I still wonder if it does justice to our current reality or links us too strongly to the past. When we refer to some as “divorced” or “widowed,” for instance, are we honoring a significant relationship that has ended or defining someone in terms of what they once were? Even a term like “cancer-survivor” – which I know has many positive associations for those who have endured diagnosis and treatment and come out on the other side grateful for their recovery – can risk defining a person in terms of what they have overcome and reducing who they are to a single dimension. In this story, it seems like it’s just really, really hard for the people around the man who received his sight to adjust to his new reality or see him for anything more than what he used to be. And so, some folks don’t recognize him at all. Others, including his parents, know what he struggled with and see his transformation but aren’t sure what to make of it.

The two exceptions to this pattern of being trapped in designations reflecting the past are, first, the man himself and, second, Jesus. The man who sees rejoices in his recovery and looks ahead to an open future that probably exceeds anything he had previously imagined. How else, I wonder, could he engage the religious authorities who have intimidated others with such good humor: “Do you, also, want to become his disciples?” Indeed, there is a certain joyfulness to his portions of dialogue that is easy to miss if we understand him only as “the man born blind.” Consider the brave playfulness of his retorts to the authority: “I do not know if he was a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see” (v. 25) Or, “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” (30-33). He has been given an open future. And nothing will deter him from seizing it. Jesus also looks to the future rather than the past, inviting this man to faith and encouraging him by not just taking his question seriously but by revealing himself to him. All of this leads the man who now sees to make the quintessential confession in John’s Gospel: “Lord, I believe.”

This story invites us to take stock of our past. The good, the difficult, the encouraging, the challenging and ask what we need to let go of in order to receive the open future God has prepared for us. What designations no longer serve us? How do we understand ourselves in terms of tragedy or challenge or limitation? And how might we grasp hold of the open future that Jesus’ grace and forgiveness and resurrection provide? How might the baptismal identity of “child of God” replace some of the other names we’ve been called or have accepted? This is not at all to deny the importance of the past or some of the scars (or for that matter triumphs) we carry forward. But it is, perhaps, to be reminded that the way forward is in the future. Jesus’ cross reminds us that the hurts, sorrows, mistakes, and regrets that have marked us may describe us, but they do not define us, for we are God’s beloved children. And Jesus’ resurrection assures us that God’s love is more powerful than our tragedies and that the future is always open.

**Thanks be to God,**  
Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

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*Traditional version:*  
Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from  
evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

*Contemporary version:*  
Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial  
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever. Amen