

The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh
Rose Sunday- March 15, 2026- Lent 4A
Given at Christ Church Quaker Farms, Oxford, CT

1 Sam 16.1-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5.8-14; John 9.1-41

“Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light...” †

Today is the 4th Sunday of Lent, also known as the ‘Rose Sunday’ of Lent, when the colors lighten up just for a day and we catch a glimpse of the coming light of Easter. Light and darkness... blindness and sight...

Today’s Gospel is full of dualistic images in conflict with one another. Indeed, the long passage from the Fourth Gospel (John), telling the story of the healing of the blind man, points out that it is the Pharisees—those knowledgeable lawyers and leaders of the community—who are blind...for they don’t see who Jesus really is... they don’t get it.

As many of you may know, this Gospel was written for a particular community at the end of the 1st Century, one undergoing great political and personal turmoil. Those who believed Jesus as Messiah were being thrown out of the synagogues; their faith in Jesus made it impossible for them to remain in those faith communities. Hence, the inference that the parents of the blind man are afraid of ‘the Jews’ and that ‘the Jews’ are ‘blind’ and unknowing—they don’t see Jesus, they can’t see the Light of the World.

From the OT, we hear the wonderful story of King David’s anointing by Samuel echoes how often we humans don’t see rightly: ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see, they look to appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart’ (1 Sam). This passage always reminds me of one of my favorite children’s stories, The Little Prince, by Antoine de Saint Exupéry, especially the part about how the young prince came into relationship with a wild fox. After he has been tamed by the prince, the fox says: ‘And here is my secret, a very simple secret: it is only with the heart that we can see rightly, what is essential is invisible to the eye.’

Several years ago, there was a wonderful story on PBS about a remarkable High School Choir in suburban Chicago, The New Trier High Choir. It was composed of children of various backgrounds and included special needs students. I remember hearing the beautiful harmony and watching a beautiful young lady, the Valedictorian, singing and swaying next to stocky girl with Down’s Syndrome... and the handsome star quarterback singing next a skinny boy who obviously was blind. They all moved and sang in perfect harmony, smiling and feeling joy as they sang together.

That star quarterback was later interviewed and was asked by the reporter what it was like to work and sing with ‘handicapped students,’ and he just laughed and said, “Handicapped? They’re not handicapped! We’re the ones who are handicapped... Mike has helped me to ‘see’ more clearly, to notice more things in the world... to see what’s important in life... It’s made me realize that I’m the one whose been blind.”

‘What is essential is invisible to the eye’!

And this is what Jesus emphasizes to his disciples, when they ask about the blind man. 'Was it his sin, or the sin of his parents that caused him to be blind?' Jesus is blunt: 'You're missing the point; you're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame! There is no cause and effect here. Don't look to blame and seek easy answers. Look instead for what God can do... for what God *is* doing.'

The last few weeks have been tough for me, and as I reflected on these Scriptures, I realized how often I (we) see things unclearly. So often, like the Pharisees, we're blind. This seems even harder when we think we're surrounded by emptiness and darkness. At times like that, it's almost impossible to see God at work.

When we see things we don't like, when bad things happen to us or to those we love, when life seems overwhelming and hard... it's important to remember that phrase: 'what is essential is invisible to the eye.' It's important to know that God is there, in the midst of it all, holding us!

St Paul assures us, we *are* children of light. Called to turn away from easy answers; called to reject social determinations based on race, culture, social status, or education; called to reject doom and gloom negative attitudes and stand-up to those who prefer darkness over light.

'The Lord does not see as mortals see... on the outward appearance.' So, let's open our hearts, both in times of hardship and in times of joy, and try to see as God sees and love as God loves. †