

Fourth Sunday in Lent, Year A  
A Sermon Preached by Fr Ian M Delinger  
on March 15, 2026

1 Samuel 16:1-13 / Psalm 23 / Ephesians 5:8-14 / John 9:1-41

*May my words be acceptable to God;  
faithful to the teachings of Christ;  
and inspired by the Holy Spirit;  
that we may be blessed by the same Triune God.*

What do you need in your relationship with Jesus right now? Do you need a *miracle*? Or do you need a *sign*? Do you need Jesus to do something for you, do the impossible for you? Or do you just need to know that Jesus that whom you believe Him to be?

In today's Gospel, the Man Born Blind experienced a miracle from Jesus. But Jesus' miracle of restoring his sight is not the main point of the story. The *sign* that Jesus did illustrated to others – the Disciples, the Pharisees, the townspeople, the Man Born Blind and his parents – the sign illustrated to them that Jesus was the Son of Man, the Messiah. The Man did not ask anything of Jesus; his parents did not ask Jesus to give sight to their son.

*He was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.*

Jesus' need to show others that He is the Son of Man just happened to benefit the Man Born Blind. It's like the volunteer from the audience at a magic show. The woman who gets sawn in half is simply the means by which we are convinced of the magician's true talents.

Jesus doesn't even say to the Man Born Blind, "*Your faith has made you well,*" as He does to so many other whom He heals. The Man indeed expresses his faith, but it's not what cures him. The Man, like other onlookers in the story, comes to realize that Jesus is more than just another man, more than just a healer. Jesus is Lord, Son of Man, the Messiah.

In times of deep distress or trouble, we humans have a tendency to ask for a miracle: to heal, to provide for, to altar circumstances. We believe that the *miracle* is what will save us. If we ask God for the right thing, if we position ourself in the right way, if we express the details of what is required, the miracle will happen. But sometimes – probably most of the time – it’s not the miracle that we get. Often times, it’s a *sign* that we *need*. But we’re not looking for the sign – we’re looking for the miracle – so I wonder how often we miss the *sign* that we need because we’re looking for the *miracle*. Perhaps we too often miss the *sign* that would cause us to say, “*Lord, I believe!*”

Even though Jesus’ miracle in today’s Gospel was a *sign*, and the point was to illustrate His true self, it still garnered the desired effect: *Faith*. As followers of Jesus, we are not followers of a magician. We are followers of the Son of Man. And as much as we want Jesus to perform miracles so that our lives are better or simpler, Jesus calls us to *faith*, and that we:

*Live as children of light—  
for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.*

It is in the Light of Christ that we:

*Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.*

That is most often where the healing, the providing for or the change of circumstances come from. Through faith, we discover the path that we are to go. It may not be the path that we wanted or that we thought it would be. But with true faith in the Son of Man, we can be cured of our blindness and see the path to peace. Perhaps our prayer should be for a deeper faith so that we can see the signs of Jesus’ work that is all around us. But how do we know that the signs, when we see them, are really Jesus at work?

Today, we are struggling to discern what is real and authentic as opposed to what is fake and deliberately misleading. With the rise of Artificial Intelligence, we are

and will continue to be deceived by words, music, images and videos that claim to be the truth, but are in fact fake. On Tuesday at the school Superintendent's Common Ground Advisory Task Force, we spent the entire 3hr session deliberating the use of AI in schools. Both the NYTimes and NPR had articles on the rise of and the use of AI. And last week, someone confronted me with statistics on her phone showing me that 66% of clergy admitted that they use AI for part or all of their sermons. *"Surely your job is to give an authentic message to your followers!"*

She was right! I'm here to not only deliver an authentic message about the Good News of Jesus Christ, but to engage you in an authentic experience of the Love of God, in this place, with this group of people. And my hope is that you then take an authentic expression of God's Love into the world with you as you leave here.

But, the reason why we gather here this morning has also become a challenge: *What is real Christianity?* As White Christian Nationalism takes a stronger hold on the levers of power in our country, it will continue to be an uphill struggle to convince those skeptical or hostile toward the Church that there is a Christian Way that

*seeks and serves Christ in all persons, that includes loving our neighbor as oneself, striving for justice and peace among all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being.*

Those who want nothing to do with the Church or with "Christians" – who may be our family members, friends and neighbors – see the signs of the Christian faith as the condemnation of persons in the LGBTQ+ community. They see the signs of a Christian as calling for the eradication of Muslims. They see the signs of a Christian as demanding authoritarian social control. They see the White Christian Nationalists in the news wrapping those values in being followers of Jesus. The signs of the ever-dominant "Christian" groups in the United States don't align with what the non-followers understand Christian values to be. So, the non-followers need true signs of the Christian faith, true signs of the Love of Christ.

So, the *miracle* for mainstream Christianity to regain a voice in the national conversation, the *miracle* needed for *Jesus'* voice to be a part of the national conversation is for the White Christian Nationalists to include other Christians in the conversation. That miracle is not going to happen. So, we need *signs* of *Jesus'* voice. We need *signs* of the shepherd. We need *signs* of the Light.

Maybe the mainstream Christians, the ones who have spent the last 250 years keeping their faith within the church building, can be the sign to wider society that there *is* a Christian pathway that puts love over hate, that puts people over profits, that puts community over corporation.

That requires us to step into the Light. That requires us to be seen. It may involve not being believed at first, and, like the Man Born Blind, being questioned repeatedly by those who just don't understand that there is this great person who is more than just a man: He is the Son of Man, the Messiah. It might come with some discomfort. It might come by being the last person in a string of the wrong person, like Samuel having to meet every brother before finding the Lord's anointed in the unassuming brother, David.

Here we are: 3wks from Easter Sunday. How do we step into the Light and be the *sign* of all that Easter represents? How do we be the *sign* that Easter isn't about chocolate bunnies and honey-baked ham, but about Resurrection and New Life? How do we be the *sign* that Easter is about *redemption* for those who also dare to seek out and walk into the Light?

We need a miracle, right? Perhaps – perhaps not.

I started working in the Church when I was 19yo, first at a Lutheran Summer Camp. Ever since then, there has been two opposing camps on how to be a Christian in society. One camp firmly holds to two buzz phrases:

The 1960s song *They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love*

and

The command mis-attributed to St Francis: *Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.*

Both of these are absolutely part of living a Christian life in the wider world. We are to love God and love neighbor, and we are called to spread the Good News. But if they are the only ways that we express our Christian faith, we are stuck in the dark, or at least in the shadows.

Then there is the other camp that believes that we need to be explicit about our Christian faith at all times. That would be my English teacher from high school, Miss Sedivy. She was always talking about her faith and what she got up to at Church. Her faith was central, not only to her identity, but to her daily living. It was annoying. But she never directly proselytized; from what I recall, she only shared her life in terms of her faith. She used words. And she demonstrably loved everyone, even the ornery kids in the school.

But Atheists and Agnostics will tell you that Christians do not have a monopoly on love and expressing love to others. They will tell you that Christians aren't the only people who do good things in the community. They will tell you that what they see is Christians being hypocrites. To them, Christians are those who are judgmental and who exclude people, who want to control other people's lives. And while that's not the Christian pathway that I recognize, I understand that what they see in their communities and in the news do so very often look like that.

So, how do we be the *sign* that helps them see Jesus, the Light of the World? How do we both, show our love and the Love of God, *and* use the words of the Good News to be the *sign* that there is a Christian pathway that is *not* the White Christian Nationalism that is infecting our country? When we use words, they will be like the Pharisees and they will revile you saying, "*You are his disciple, and we*

*do not know where he comes from.” You will show love and they will say, “Well, so do we.”*

Being the *sign* of what we understand to be the Christian pathway, to live out our Baptismal Covenant in today’s world, will come with roadblocks and repeated rebuffs. Walking into the Light and walking as Children of Light might not be like *lying down in green pastures and being led beside still waters*. But, *God walks with you through the valley of the shadow of death, so that you shall fear no evil*. If we recite these words, we need to believe these words.

I’m sure that in your life, someone was the Child of Light for you. Someone stepped out of the darkness with their faith in Jesus on full display, and that was the sign that you needed at that moment, in that circumstance. Their words combined with their actions were not the *miracle* that you wanted, but they were the *sign* that you needed. Let our life’s work as Christians be the same.

Let us *live as Children of light* and show others that

*the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.*

And maybe as Children of Light, we will one day *be* Jesus’ miracle that those who are blind may one day see.