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In his book *Cherished Belonging*, without putting it in exactly these words, Jesuit [Fr. Greg Boyle](#) tells story after story about the holiness of his "homies," the [former gang members he knows and loves](#). In the joy he takes in them, Boyle has developed a way of seeing that few people have mastered.

We begin our fourth week of Lent with John's story about the various ways that Jesus, the disciples, a man born blind, bystanders, parents and religious leaders chose to perceive God and others in their world. The scene opens as disciples notice a blind man. Rather than focus on him as a needy person like themselves, they ask who was to blame for his condition: Was God punishing him or was it a result of his parents' wrongdoing? They saw hardship and perceived sin.

How many people are trapped in this sort of thinking? Maybe it's not quite so blatant, but who hasn't heard someone say, "Why did God let this happen to me?" Interestingly, it doesn't just refer to bad things, but also, "God has blessed me with good things," or even something like, "God got me the parking spot just in time."

Fourth Sunday of Lent

[March 15, 2026](#)

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Psalms 23

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

Underneath these statements lurks what Boyle calls a " 'Department of Corrections' God," a God who controls the events of our lives, meting out rewards and punishments according to our behavior or divine whim.

Throughout his mission, Jesus countered that theology. His perception of the work of God offered a bright contrast to that of many of his contemporaries. Instead of asking why or expecting God to intervene, Jesus did what he could: Using the medicinal techniques of his era, he healed the man's eyes.

Jesus' healing action — which happened on a Sabbath — spurred deeper questions: How and when does God act in our world? What does God want from us?

Some in today's story simply avoided these questions. Rather than grapple with the issue of Jesus' goodness or sinfulness, the fellow's parents refused to get involved: "Ask him, not us!" Others evaded the problem saying that the guy they saw just looked like the blind man. Case closed.

Some who lived faithful to the law were genuinely confused. Was Jesus another magician or charlatan? Was he trying to discredit their religious traditions by working wonders and flaunting the Sabbath? Others who already distrusted Jesus judged him as a sinful Sabbath breaker.

The once-blind man, whom some traditions call Celidonium, started out as uncertain or blind as any of the others. He hadn't asked for sight, Jesus simply healed him. Then he heard folks turn the tables. People who used to call Celidonium a sinner now claimed that his healer was the sinner.

Perhaps because he knew they had judged him wrongly, Celidonium saw the situation differently. He stated the simplest facts: "About sin, I can't say, all I know is that he opened my eyes. Isn't that the point here? Didn't he do something better than those who criticized me and my family or pitied me with a pittance? Isn't it most God-like to help, to heal?"

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Celidonium had the courage to contradict his questioners. All he knew about Jesus was that he had done a good thing. That was enough for him. Without great theological background, Celidonium saw clearly that Jesus was holy.

John's story about Celidonium could be a play about learning to recognize God and the works of God in ordinary circumstances. We hear in today's first reading that it took God some doing to convince Samuel that humanity's veneration of success, strength, physical attractiveness, wealth, etc., tells us nothing about how God sees the world. St. Paul called the Ephesians children of the light and reminded them that the light of God always gives life and nothing else.

All three readings find a focus on how to perceive holiness or to see God in action.

Today, many of us feel surrounded by darkness: wars, leaders who disseminate lies, proud hate groups, the maltreatment of vulnerable and innocent people, and much

more. Jesus condemned these kinds of things as sins of willful blindness. In the face of that, our Liturgy of the Word invites us to learn to see differently.

Jesus' healing of the blind man was a holy act. Some marveled at the good done. Others, ignoring Celidonius' need, perceived only sin against the Sabbath.

In this world of darkness and light, we can't focus on everything, we must choose where to direct our attention and thus our hearts. If we concentrate on evil, we'll discover it all around — and probably end up depressed and/or afraid. When we seek God's light, we can master new, loving and joy-filled ways of seeing. It will be much more fun and bring us more grace than the other option!