

Sermon for March 15, 2026 - John 9:1-41

For those who don't know me, my name is Eli Deifeld. I am a pastor from the Lutheran Church of Brazil and now live here in Victoria with my family.

Today we are welcoming, once again, new members to our Church. We are glad that you are joining our congregation and decided to serve God in this church. Together we are stronger. We hope you will feel at home.

A while ago, my son asked me: Why does Easter always change days? They should fix that. Christian Easter follows the Jewish lunar-solar calendar. Easter is celebrated on the first full moon after the beginning of spring (equinox). That's why it falls on a different day every year.

And, to prepare our hearts for Easter, we have this special time called Lent. Throughout Lent this year, we are reflecting on baptism. Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday tells the story of a man born blind and healed by Christ. "I was blind, now I see," declares the man.

In baptism, God opens our eyes so that we can see the truth of who we are: God's beloved children. In the reading from the Old Testament today, David was anointed king of Israel. Similarly, in baptism, our head is anointed with oil, and we are called to bear witness of the light of Christ in our daily lives.

The Gospel reminds us of the compassion of Jesus for the blind man. While for many the question was who had sinned, either the man or his parents, the answer of Jesus was that the illness was not a result of sin. Moreover, Jesus welcomed the man, who had been excluded his whole life because of his condition. The same way, Jesus embraces us when we are weak, sick, sad, or worried. In baptism, we are reminded that we are not alone, that we are lifted up by God's presence in difficult times.

The next aspect I would like to highlight about today's Gospel is that, according to Jewish law at the time, Jesus could not have healed the blind man on the Sabbath. However, when Jesus performed this miracle on a Saturday, he is affirming that the law, or laws, must be at the service of life – and not the other way around.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus showed himself as the one who came to serve. Power, laws, and those in power, in God's view, are entrusted with the mission of serving life, and not the other way around. Over the centuries, this vision has allowed the development of laws that protect and promote life, and the establishment of governments that uphold them. When new laws are needed, it is our duty to advocate for them. When existing laws that protect life are not followed, it is our duty to denounce that.

In current times, I believe we have much to denounce, such as the lack or fragility of laws that protect women, transgender people, children, and immigrants against violence. Also, the lack of regulation of social media platforms, which allows for numerous crimes, like the exposition of children and youth to inappropriate content, extortion, and recruitment.

And, in the various ongoing wars in the world today, we see many violations of international law, such as indiscriminate attacks against civilians, the use of toxic ammunition like white phosphorus, and violations of human rights (how many people are without water, food, or medicine?).

Considering the latest events, we express deep sorrow for all the victims of the recent bombings in the Middle East, for the losses of innocent people, including many children. We pray for an immediate end to all hostilities and a resolution based on dialog.

The final aspect I would like to address about the Gospel is that, when Jesus mixes saliva with earth and forms mud, he is reminding us of God's creation – made of mud and given the breath of life. Jesus gave sight to the blind man. "I was blind, now I see." Jesus brought a new vision to the world. With his life and death, Jesus affirmed that we are

loved by God. And he invites us to open our eyes to this way of life based on compassion, solidarity, and love. And to allow this vision to guide our lives.

A few days ago, I listened to a news story related to Tumbler Ridge. After the tragedy that occurred in that community, a quilt shop owner from Kamloops decided to launch a campaign to send handmade quilts to each one of the people affected – a gesture of comfort, solidarity, and affection for the families, students, teachers, first responders, and community members. The campaign spread around, and quilts arrived from various places in Canada. Heather Fagervik, the campaign organizer, said: "We can send the only thing we can: a symbol of comfort, a symbol of caring. We are grieving for them too."

The seeds of compassion are among us. The hope for a better world does not come from warlords who destroy, but from ordinary people who build, who create, who make handmade quilts and serve as quilts to one another.

May we also be like quilts, of various sizes and colours, sewn together by God's hands, with threads of solidarity and compassion, of those who weep with those who weep, of those who bring comfort, of those who build new worldviews based on love.

Today we welcome new members to our congregation. And, I would say, to our colorful and warm quilt that our church is.

And together, may God's love continue to help us to be signs of Christ's light, to be like quilts in our daily lives. And, remember, in baptism God opens our eyes to see who we are: God's beloved children. Amen.