

Rev. Mike Cole
Providence Presbyterian Church
Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 15, 2026
Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

“Blind Grace”

A few years ago, Ellie and I had a harrowing experience on our way to Denver for one of her cancer treatments. We were driving on the interstate in that new section leading to Castle Rock, when I noticed a truck and trailer about ½ mile ahead with one of four tires on the trailer wobbling. As I watched, the wheel suddenly spun off the axle and careened toward the right shoulder of the interstate. Then the wheel hit a guardrail and ricocheted straight up in the air at least 50 feet.

It was surreal experience to watch all of this unfold while we were travelling at 75 mph. However, the scene turned more dangerous as I realized that the tire, several stories in the air, was headed straight toward us. That’s when time seemed to slow down as I calculated the wheel’s trajectory and determined that I would need to swerve in order to miss the flying wheel. Fortunately, I veered just enough to the left shoulder for the wheel to miss us. I watched in my rear view mirror as the wheel bounced its way down the interstate. I lost sight of it and still don’t know if it hit any vehicle.

Needless to say, I was shaken. But Ellie slept through the whole thing! She finally woke up when I swerved but she was oblivious to my masterful maneuvering and wasn’t aware of the danger we were in.

I’ve thought about that day many times and for lots of reasons. I worried about the vehicles behind us. I marveled that the truck and trailer that lost a wheel just kept on going, unaware that it had lost a wheel. I shuddered to think of the outcome if the wheel had hit us. I pondered the unpredictability of life. I also wondered about why all of this had happened.

I was looking for some explanation, some cause and effect. Was the truck driver negligent? Why should his negligence endanger others? Were we spared because we are good people? But lots of good people are struck by tragedy.

This is sort of what we do when unexpected things happen, isn’t it? We look for reasons and try to make logical sense of what happened. Well, that’s what was going on when Jesus healed a man born blind. The disciples immediately jumped to the conclusion that either the man or his parents were to blame for his blindness. Surely, they thought, someone

must be responsible. But Jesus, said, “Nope. He was born blind for no reason at all except that now we get to show God’s amazing grace by healing him.”

Aren’t we just like the disciples, looking for a cause of every effect? In fact most of us have not progressed beyond the toddler stage, asking “Why?” of most everything that happens. We pride ourselves on not being like those ancient peoples who believed illness comes from sinfulness. But how different is that from assuming that people are homeless because they are irresponsible? Or assumptions that addicts are weak? Or assumptions that poor people are lazy?

All of us play the cause and effect game to explain things that puzzle or confuse us. We want to draw a straight line from an identifiable cause to a resulting effect, but the reality is that for many of life’s conundrums, there are no discernible straight lines. We want simple answers to complex questions so that we don’t have to face not knowing or understanding. When someone gets cancer, it’s not because of something they did or didn’t do. Cancer happens to saints as well as sinners. Bad things happen to good people all the time and that confuses us.

The truth is that there is a certain amount of randomness to life. Accidents happen because they areaccidents. Sure, we can connect the dots all day long. A bank fails because of greed. A war starts because of thirst for power. A crime is committed out of desperation. But where does all that dot-connecting get us? Sometimes knowing the cause of a disaster can prevent a future disaster. But that’s usually not what we are looking for, is it?

We are looking for blame. But does blame lengthen our lives? Does it improve our health? Does it help us sleep better at night? Not really. At the end of the day, our lives are not improved by pinpointing the cause that created the effect.

Jesus understood this. That’s why he steered the disciples in a different direction when they asked whose sin caused the man’s blindness. Jesus’ focus was not on blame but on healing. You see when the disciples posed their question, they depersonalized the man. In turn, Jesus personalized him for them. The blind man was not a specimen to study; he was a man in need of healing.

Jesus yanked them out of the theoretical into the practical. In essence, he told them their question was dumb. That’s why they were called “Duh-ciples.” Jesus wasn’t concerned with the “why or the wherefore” he was all about the “where to.”

Jesus lived in the moment. And he took that moment to make a moment for salvation. Jesus’ ministry was not about what was but what can be. He realized that we spend way too much time on what was and it doesn’t get us anywhere. He pulls the disciples and us into the realm of what can be.

Jesus didn't hesitate to heal the man's blindness and change what was into what can be. Christ also doesn't hesitate to transform what was into what can be for us. But we have to change our focus from the past to the future. Dwelling on the past simply makes us re-live episodes that hold us back from what God has in store for us. Jesus' answer to the "Why?" is, "It doesn't matter."

What matters is where we go from here. That's the grace of God in action. God doesn't dwell on our past deeds and misdeeds, so why should we? We've all heard of blind faith. What Jesus embodies is blind grace – grace that comes to us no matter what. Jesus didn't care about the blind man's history. He blindly bestowed grace by healing the blind man. God blindly bestows grace on us when we stop looking backward.

That's also true for us as a church. During this past year we have turned our gaze from the past and set our sights on the future God has in mind for us. Our worship attendance is increasing; we have a youth Group; we have amazing musicians in our choir; we are blessed with more than a dozen members who serve as worship leaders and liturgists; we have excellent audio-visual equipment and an even more amazing man who faithfully runs it every Sunday; and we continue to commit to using our facilities for the benefit of the community.

My goodness, that's a lot of blind grace for one congregation! Can I get an AMEN? But just as with the man born blind, we are not blessed by grace just for our own sake. The blind man told others about his healing and so must we. As we reflect on the blind grace we have received and look to the future it is our responsibility to share grace blindly with others. Perhaps there is a family member, co-worker or friend who could use some extra grace in their lives. Pray for them, invite them to worship and be the conduit of grace to bless their life. Our calling is to join Jesus in blindly spreading grace to heal the ills of the world. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Charge: Wherever you go, God is sending you. Wherever you are, God will equip you. God will accomplish a purpose in your being where you are. Christ who dwells within you has something He wants to do through you where you are. Believe this and go in God's grace, love and power. Amen