

The Rev'd R. Kevin Kelly | Sermon | The Fourth Sunday in Lent A March 15, 2026

In some parts of the Church,
today, the 4th Sunday in Lent,
is known as Mid-Lent,
or Rose Sunday.

The official name is
Laetare Sunday,
taken from the first word
of the traditional opening antiphon -
*Laetare Jerusalem -
Rejoice, O Jerusalem.*

In the middle of the long
penitential season of Lent,
we are given a little break,
a lightening of the strict observance
of our Lenten discipline.

It's called Rose Sunday,
because the traditional color
for the season of Lent is purple,
but on this Sunday the vestments
and church hangings would change
to rose - a lighter shade to reflect
the lighter tone of the day.

There's another Rose Sunday in Advent,
the third Sunday,
which is why you see Advent wreaths
with three purple candles and one,
that's supposed to be rose,
but invariably comes out
bubble gum pink.

So don't let anyone tell you
that candle is pink in honor of Mary,
as some have come to believe.

Only a few Episcopal parishes
observe Rose Sunday,
but some do.
You can look it up;
the colors can be quite lovely.

I really like the idea of Rose Sunday,
of a day in the middle of Lent

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when we're encouraged
to lighten up a bit,
and I love that on this day
we're given a Gospel reading,
with pretty much the same message.

I find the story itself lighthearted.
From the very beginning,
the only two people who seem,
to understand what's really going on,
are Jesus and the man born blind.

Everyone else
is all in a dither about something,
so much so that they miss
the very miracle that
is happening
right in front of their eyes.

It's there, but they will not see it;
they're so frantically running around.

They're all blathering about sin,
about being born in sin,
about it being the sabbath,
and about how on earth
someone so scandalous as Jesus
was able to restore someone's sight.

If we could see this scene
acted out before our eyes,
we might realize how ridiculous
the characters' behavior is.

And in the middle of their uptight,
silly self-righteousness,
Rose Sunday, our Gospel,
and Jesus himself,
are all telling us, Hey, lighten up.

Or, in the words of Taylor Swift,
You need to calm down,
you're being too loud.

The Pharisees are losing their minds
over *how* this miracle happened,

rather than seeing *what* God has done.
They go after the man,
his parents and their neighbors,
and even Jesus,
all while being more blind
than the man in the story ever was,
to the very visible evidence
of God in their midst.

I feel like the man -
we're never told his name -
is just sort of standing there, saying,
"Hey. All you God experts,
You realize I can see now, right?"

And in the middle of all of it,
is Jesus,
which is where Jesus usually is -
right in the middle of our lives,
right in the midst of human need.

I wonder how often,
we get so distracted by things
that seem so important at the time,
that we miss the miracle, too.
How often do we fail to see Jesus,
even when he's right in front
of our eyes?

The season of Lent calls us,
to seek that nearer presence of Jesus,
and to notice
the things in our lives,
that have become a distraction,
or even an obstacle,
to that close connection
that God desires of us.

That practice of noticing,
of distinguishing between
what is of God,
and what isn't,
is discernment.
It might be the real work of Lent,
and it's hard to do,
when we are as wrapped up

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in our own stuff
as the Pharisees are today.

This past week, I'll admit,
that's how I was feeling -
caught up in all sorts of worries,
and feeling very far from that place of
knowing God's presence with me.

I didn't think of it in these terms at the time,
but I was just about as blind
to where God was as our Pharisees.

I knew I was meeting
with my spiritual director on Thursday,
and I thought, "Well, if I can just hang on
until then,
he'll help me get back to rights."

I told him what was going on,
and he shared with me an image,
that I'd like to share with you.

Imagine that you're on a subway platform;
the train rolls into the station,
slows to a halt,
and the doors open.
Inside the car are all the
distracting feeling and preoccupations,
just begging for your attention,
luring you to get on board.

Stand still where you are, he said,
knowing that in a moment,
the doors of that car will close,
and the train will pull away,
without you on it.
It is not for you.

He saw what I could not,
that by trying to set everything
back to right myself,
I was trying to manage a
burden that was never mine
to carry.

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He was right,
and once I could see that,
I immediately felt lighter.
I didn't need to find my way
back to God.

I just needed let go of
all the things,
that kept me from seeing,
that God was already there,
and those things I was clinging to,
weren't mine to hold.

If it is true that there are none so blind
as those who will not see,
it is also true that
even when we do not see God,
God still sees us.

Jesus still stands, as ever,
in the middle of our lives,
in the midst of all human need,

We have only to lighten up a bit,
to let loose of whatever it is
we are clinging to so tightly,
and to allow Him to open our eyes,
so that we may see Him,
where He is.