SERMON TAKE-HOME NOTES — April 26, 2026

The Gospel Readings for the 4th Sunday in Lent (John 9) and the 4th Sunday of Easter (John 10:1-10) belong together. John 9 begins:

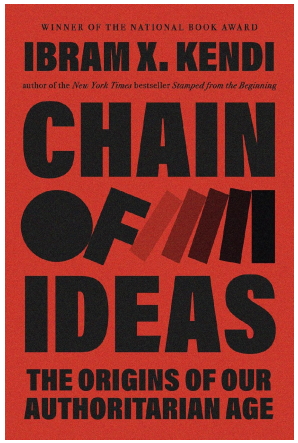
> As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but in order that the works of God might be revealed in him we must work the works of him who sent me while it is day." (John 9:1-4)

The healing of the man born blind takes place in two verses (6-7) and the rest of John 9 (34 verses!) is a debate about who's a sinner. The Pharisees deem Jesus a sinner for healing on the Sabbath, and with him the healed man for following Jesus. At the end of John 9, Jesus flips the matter of sin onto the Pharisees, saying to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains" (John 9:41).

But here's the thing: This morning's Gospel follows immediately with no break whatsoever. Jesus is continuing to speak to those same Pharisees when he continues,

> "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. (John 10:1-4)

In short, Jesus in John 9–10 isn't just healing a man blind from birth. He's beginning to heal humanity's blindness to what is truly sin, a blindness that has plagued us since the 'birth' of our so-called civilizations. Our nations and empires have tended towards leaders who work to control the narrative about sin and evil. When they can convince enough of us who the real sinners are, then we let them lead us. Jesus is naming this as the real sin. He comes to expose it by letting himself die on the cross.



I've been recommending a book about how this works in today's recent political world. Ibram X. Kendi's *Chain of Ideas: The Origins of the Age of Authoritarianism*. It is a 500 page book detailing an argument about how modern-day authoritarian leaders try to convince us that there are lesser folks — 'sinners,' if you will — who are trying to replace us. They even call it the Great Replacement Theory. There's a chapter on a leader in Germany (who hasn't been elected yet to high office), Alice Wiedel of the new Neo-Nazi party called Alternative für Deutschland (*für* intentionally close to *Führer*?). One of her opponents, Lars Klingbeil, uses language reminiscent of today's Gospel, such that Kendi comments:

> Klingbeil dubs Weidel a "wolf in sheep's clothing." Not completely true. Great replacement politicians do operate, in policy, like wolves. But these politicians aren't necessarily clothed as sheep. They clothe everyday White Christians as sheep. Great replacement politicians dress up, in rhetoric, as shepherds who protect the sheep. "God looked down on his planned paradise and said, 'I need a caretaker,' so God gave us Trump," began one Trump campaign video in January 2024. Trump is "a shepherd to mankind who won't ever leave nor forsake them." The history of great replacement politicians is the history of political wolves in shepherds' clothing herding sheep from privileged groups toward their own domination. (243-44)

Remember last week's insight into our sin of looking for *the One* who will protect and free us from our enemies? Jesus comes to show us a God who is the One-in-Many, not the One. The sin we are blind to is looking for *the One* in the first place, who takes advantage of the power we give them to basically steal from us and kill us.

Jesus is not just the Good Shepherd, the One. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sing of the world. He becomes a sacrificed sheep in order to show us true shepherding. Sheep and shepherd–One from Many.