



FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

FIRST READING: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

A reading from First Samuel.

¹The LORD said to Samuel,
“How long will you grieve over Saul?
I have rejected him from being king over Israel.
Fill your horn with oil and set out;
I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite,
for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.”

²Samuel said, “How can I go?
If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.”
And the LORD said,

“Take a heifer with you, and say,
‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’
³Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do;
and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.”

⁴Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem.
The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said,
“Do you come peaceably?”

⁵He said,
“Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD;
sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.”
And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought,
“Surely the LORD’s anointed is now before the LORD.”

⁷But the LORD said to Samuel,
“Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature,
because I have rejected him;
for the LORD does not see as mortals see;
they look on the outward appearance,
but the LORD looks on the heart.”

⁸Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel.
He said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.”

⁹Then Jesse made Shammah pass by.
And he said,
“Neither has the LORD chosen this one.”

FIRST READING *Bethlehemite = BETH-leh-myt heifer = HEF-er Eliab = eh-LY-ub Abinadab = uh-BIN-uh-dab Shammah = SHAM-uh Ramah = RAY-muh*

“The Lord does not see as mortals see.” This is the author’s message in the reading. It is a wonderful story that demands energy and enthusiasm in the telling. The names of the some of the sons of Jesse provide their own challenge. Try to be as confident about your pronunciation of their names as of the names of your own friends. Take the time to develop that familiarity.

¹⁰Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel,
and Samuel said to Jesse,
“The LORD has not chosen any of these.”

¹¹Samuel said to Jesse,
“Are all your sons here?”
And he said,
“There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.”
And Samuel said to Jesse,
“Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.”

¹²He sent and brought him in.
Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome.
The LORD said,
“Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.”
¹³Then Samuel took the horn of oil,
and anointed him in the presence of his brothers;
and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.
Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

PSALMODY: Psalm 23

SECOND READING: Ephesians 5:8-14

A reading from Ephesians.

⁸Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light.
Live as children of light—
⁹for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.
¹⁰Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.
¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.
¹²For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly;
¹³but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,
¹⁴for everything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore it says,
“Sleeper, awake!
Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

SECOND READING *Ephesians = eh-FEE-zhunz*

This brief text is deceptively difficult. Perhaps a helpful handle is realizing that the author talks not about being *in* the darkness but about *being* darkness and—Christ having shone on us—being light. The reader may find it helpful in understanding the thrust of verse 14 to take a look at Isaiah 60:1, 1 Timothy 3:16, and John 11:9-10. To be light is to be utterly transformed, to rise to a life of newness.

GOSPEL: John 9:1-41

The holy gospel according to John.

¹As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth.

²His disciples asked him,

“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

³Jesus answered,

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned;

he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.

⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day;
night is coming when no one can work.

⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva
and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, ⁷saying to him,

“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent).

Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask,
“Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?”

⁹Some were saying, “It is he.”

Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.”

He kept saying, “I am the man.”

¹⁰But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?”

¹¹He answered,

“The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes,
and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’

Then I went and washed and received my sight.”

¹²They said to him, “Where is he?”

He said, “I do not know.”

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

¹⁴Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.

¹⁵Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight.

He said to them,

“He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.”

¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said,

“This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.”

But others said,

“How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?”

And they were divided.

GOSPEL *Siloam = sy-LOH-um*

This long story is loaded with dialogue. Invest significant time in determining the tone and tempo of each dramatic sequence. Rediscover the intrigue and tension the evangelist has so carefully developed in the story’s telling. Bring the story to life. Help the hearers see the Son of Man.

¹⁷So they said again to the blind man,
“What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.”
He said, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight
until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight

¹⁹and asked them,
“Is this your son, who you say was born blind?
How then does he now see?”

²⁰His parents answered,
“We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

²¹but we do not know how it is that now he sees,
nor do we know who opened his eyes.

Ask him; he is of age.
He will speak for himself.”

²²His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews;
for the Jews had already agreed
that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah
would be put out of the synagogue.

²³Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind,
and they said to him,

“Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.”

²⁵He answered,
“I do not know whether he is a sinner.
One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”

²⁶They said to him,
“What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

²⁷He answered them,
“I have told you already, and you would not listen.

Why do you want to hear it again?
Do you also want to become his disciples?”

²⁸Then they reviled him, saying,
“You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.

²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses,
but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.”

³⁰The man answered,
“Here is an astonishing thing!
You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.

³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners,
but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ▶

³²Never since the world began
has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.
³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”
³⁴They answered him,
“You were born entirely in sins,
and are you trying to teach us?”
And they drove him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had driven him out,
and when he found him, he said,
“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

³⁶He answered, “And who is he, sir?
Tell me, so that I may believe in him.”

³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have seen him,
and the one speaking with you is he.”

³⁸He said, “Lord, I believe.”

And he worshiped him.

³⁹Jesus said,
“I came into this world for judgment
so that those who do not see may see,
and those who do see may become blind.”

⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him,
“Surely we are not blind, are we?”

⁴¹Jesus said to them,
“If you were blind, you would not have sin.
But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

The gospel of the Lord.