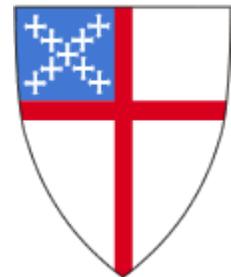


The following are the scriptures provided as a supplement to the Ante-communion service, Rite II A in the Book of Common Prayer. If you do not have a BCP, you may download it for free – Google “Book of Common Prayer free download” and follow the instructions.

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the Fourth Sunday in Lent

Year A
RCL



- [1 Samuel 16:1-13](#)
- [Ephesians 5:8-14](#)
- [John 9:1-41](#)
- [Psalm 23](#)

The Collect

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament

1 Samuel 16:1-13

The 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.” Samuel 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.’ Invite 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.” Samuel 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?" He 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.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the LORD." But 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." Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these." Samuel 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." He 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." Then 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 Response

Psalm 23

Dominus regit me

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd; *
I shall not be in want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures *
and leads me beside still waters.
- 3 He revives my soul *
and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.
- 4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil; *
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

- 5 You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; *
you have anointed my head with oil,
and my cup is running over.
- 6 Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, *
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

The Epistle

Ephesians 5:8-14

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

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

The Gospel

John 9:1-41

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; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The 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?” Some were

saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He 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." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then 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." Some 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. So 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."

The 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 and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but 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." His 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. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

So 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." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He 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?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him

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

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. Jesus 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.” Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

The Sermon:

Children of Light

By Rev. Dr. Gail Shafer; Priest in Charge, Trinity Episcopal Church

Good morning. What a strange Lent! One of our parishioners was prepared to give up something for Lent, he just didn't expect to have to give up church! Well, for those of you with internet access, there are a number of options, so giving up church altogether isn't necessary. For the duration, we will provide a number of discussion groups, recorded services, and Zoom meetings/services. The 8 am Sunday and 5:30 pm Wednesday services will be provided through the Zoom media, as these are highly interactive and often have a low number of participants. The links will be sent out to your email as an invitation to a meeting.

There are a number of services provided by our diocese and the national church that can be obtained by going to EDWM.org.

Wouldn't it be something if Samuel, Paul, and Jesus had access to email, Zoom, texts, and tweets? Yet, they were able to get the message out without so much as printed newspapers, or electronic help of any kind! And they continue to reach out to millions today.

How comforting are the words of our scripture today. My personal go to, the 23rd Psalm reminds us that a young shepherd was chosen by God to be the King of Israel. The youngest and least important of many siblings was chosen to become a powerful king, the chosen one of God to lead his people. Certainly not the one Samuel would have chosen, and God reminded him that He made his choice based on the hidden heart and spirit – something we are not privy to.

We are reminded that we have limited sight. Not just physical blindness, like that Jesus healed, but the kind of blindness of the Pharisees. Blindness to the gifts and promises of God, as well as what is expected of us as children of light. Over and over the Pharisees were shown miracles as examples of Jesus divinity. They chose not to see the reality before them. Just like this blind man, who told them repetitively what Jesus did to heal him. It was just so far beyond their ability, their

willingness to listen and to see, that they drove away the man that had been healed.

To help bring this miracle into perspective, Jesus healed a man blind from birth.

This had never been done. Blind from birth means, as we know through our modern understanding of the brain, there was no mechanism to interpret sight.

Fixing the eyes would only create a confusing, possibly frightening, input to the brain. There would be no organization, no memories of the images, no way to integrate the information into rest of the body. We use our eyesight to gauge distance, recognize pathways, friends, danger, so many important aspects of our environment.

Imagine, suddenly being able to hear the thoughts of everyone around you.

There would be no way to organize the input, or make sense of the overwhelming messages. When Jesus healed this man, he provided those neural pathways. Gave guidance to how the visual input would be used, and tempered the input so the man was not overwhelmed, and was able to become sighted as if he had always been. His world was now filled with light. He was no longer forced to beg, but could work, contribute to his family's welfare. He was made whole.

But first, he had to go wash in the pool of Siloam, which means “sent”. He was sent, to a place that he would be seen as he regained his sight. There would be witnesses. There would be the first face he would see. He may have needed someone to take him to the pool, to direct his footsteps so he wouldn’t fall, or wander off the path. And that person might have stayed to see this miracle.

He was sent. Into the fray between believers and non-believers. Where he would be confronted, questioned, and even put his parents at risk. But he was up to the challenge. He seemed to know what to say.

And he also chose to be sighted spiritually. He recognized Jesus as an instrument of God. When questioned over and over by the threatened and powerful leadership of his faith, he answered “why do you question me about this man? Do you want to become his disciples?” This was a real invitation, but was interpreted as a challenge. They had declared Jesus a sinner – and so this man, healed by Jesus, was a sinner of the same caliber. Both were rejected. Both were cast out.

Jesus reached out to this man. And within the hearing of the Pharisees told him that he was truly sighted, and was in the presence of the Son of Man.

The Pharisees question, “are you saying we are blind?” and Jesus answers that not only are they blind, but they have chosen to claim to see spiritually, and so are left with their sin.

When I was in occupational therapy school, we were given an assignment to take on a handicapping characteristic for 24 hours. I chose to be blind. I stuffed some tissue behind some sunglasses, and closed my eyes. I had to ask for help to get to the bus, to class. But I braved going down the hallway of my residence hall to the community bathroom alone. As I returned, I heard, or maybe felt, a presence in the hall, waiting ominously for me. Indeed, it was a girl that did not like me. She thought it would be entertaining to startle me as I made my way back to my room. Whenever I see someone who is blind, I think of her and her raw meanness. She was the blind one. Sometimes I wonder if she remembers that moment as clearly as I do.

During these times, we are constantly exposed to people that we do not agree with. And for whatever reason we are blind to their often-passionate beliefs. I have heard so many say “how can they believe that?” But we don’t really want to know. If we did, we might stop, ask, listen, learn, and love the person. We are,

after all, Episcopalians. I have often heard it said that if you have 100 Episcopalians in one room, you will have 101 opinions.

Right now, it is time to put everything else aside. To listen to those who are in leadership positions, locally, state, nation, and world-wide who are giving advice on how we can best weather this challenge to our society. Love your neighbor really means just that. If you feel you can be generous, contribute to GLEAP, and the food bank. Check on your family members, stay in safe contact with your friends. Learn new ways to communicate.

I have been getting bear hugs via Facebook, toe taps and elbow bumps via text and email. We need to smile often. Hold each other spiritually close, and physically separate.

Live as children of light— for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

Amen