

March 11, 2018 Fourth Sunday of Lent

Lord, heal my blindness!

1Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a Psalm 23:1-6 Ephesians 5:8-14 John 9:1-41

In the first reading the prophet Samuel is given instructions by the Lord to go to Jesse and anoint one of his sons to be the future king of Israel. Left to his own devices Samuel would have probably chosen incorrectly by judging strictly on appearances. The Lord always looks deeper, into the heart, to see the inner person. Samuel is surprised that David is the chosen one.

The prayer of the Psalmist indicates gratefulness to the Lord who is imaged as Shepherd, the One who guides us in right paths, who refreshes us and blesses us so often. It is this constant blessing, which brings goodness and kindness into our lives; it brings encouragement in difficult situations.

In the second reading Paul images the Ephesians as children of light brought out of the darkness. Now all must live in ways that reflect goodness, justice, and truth. This calls for correct judgment which comes through the light given by Jesus. Without Christ the Gentiles were once darkness itself, but now they are children of light.

In the Gospel Jesus meets the man born blind and heals him. This man, in turn, sees the light of day for the first time. He becomes a powerful witness and points to Jesus as healer and prophet and makes it clear to unbelieving religious leaders that Jesus is someone sent by God. Jesus says he has come to make the sightless see and the seeing blind. Some Pharisees take offense at the implication but Jesus makes it clear that those who claim to see should understand what comes from God.

The Father lives in unapproachable Light;
The Son is the Light of the world,
The Holy Spirit is our guiding Light.

The importance of light in our lives can be symbolized in the first moments of an electrical blackout when visibility vanishes from sight. For the man born blind there was an opposite effect for he was always in darkness and all of a sudden there was this whiteout, this new light of the world that entered his life. There is a deeper seeing in John's writings that have meaning on more than just one level. So while Jesus' words are taken literally he often speaks metaphorically so that physical light is a metaphor for spiritual insight. Even the holy prophet Samuel came to realize that true value involves more than just physical observation. Consider those around you you may have one view of them but what is God's precious view of them?

When the blind man was healed it was a sign of Christ at work in the world for those who could not believe; eyes were opened to the height and depth of God's love for them. It is not difficult to imagine a terrifying physical world without light but how many are concerned about living in spiritual darkness? The blind man testified to stubborn religious leaders of the time since they still didn't see that it is Jesus who brings the believers into his kingdom of light.

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will give you light. (Ephesians 5:14)

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