

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Reading 1 [1 SM 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A](#)

The LORD said to Samuel:
“Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way.
I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem,
for I have chosen my king from among his sons.”

As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice,
Samuel looked at Eliab and thought,
“Surely the LORD’s anointed is here before
him.”

But the LORD said to Samuel:
“Do not judge from his appearance or from his
lofty stature,
because I have rejected him.
Not as man sees does God see,
because man sees the appearance
but the LORD looks into the heart.”

In the same way Jesse presented seven sons
before Samuel,
but Samuel said to Jesse,
“The LORD has not chosen any one of these.”

Then Samuel asked Jesse,
“Are these all the sons you have?”

Jesse replied,
“There is still the youngest, who is tending the
sheep.”

Samuel said to Jesse,
“Send for him;
we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he
arrives here.”

Jesse sent and had the young man brought to
them.

He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold
and making a splendid appearance.

The LORD said,
“There—anoint him, for this is the one!”
Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand,
anointed David in the presence of his brothers;
and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD
rushed upon David.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 23: 1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6.](#)

R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

He guides me in right paths
for his name’s sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
With your rod and your staff
that give me courage.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Reading 2 [EPH 5:8-14](#)

Brothers and sisters:
You were once darkness,
but now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of light,
for light produces every kind of goodness
and righteousness and truth.
Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.
Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness;
rather expose them, for it is shameful even to
mention

the things done by them in secret;
but everything exposed by the light becomes
visible,
for everything that becomes visible is light.
Therefore, it says:

“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will give you light.”

Gospel

JN 9:1-41

As Jesus passed by 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 he nor his parents sinned;
it is so that the works of God might be made
visible through him.
We have to do the works of the one who sent me
while it is day.
Night is coming when no one can work.
While I am in the world, I am the light of the
world.”
When he had said this, he spat on the ground
and made clay with the saliva,
and smeared the clay on his eyes,
and said to him,
“Go wash in the Pool of Siloam” —which means
Sent—.
So he went and washed, and came back able to
see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him
earlier as a beggar said,
“Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?”
Some said, “It is, “
but others said, “No, he just looks like him.”
He said, “I am.”
So they said to him, “How were your eyes
opened?”
He replied,
“The man called Jesus made clay and anointed
my eyes

and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’
So I went there and washed and was able to see.”
And they said to him, “Where is he?”

He said, “I don’t know.”

They brought the one who was once blind to the
Pharisees.
Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes
on a sabbath.
So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was
able to see.
He said to them,
“He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now
I can see.”
So some of the Pharisees said,
“This man is not from God,
because he does not keep the sabbath.”
But others said,
“How can a sinful man do such signs?”
And there was a division among them.
So they said to the blind man again,
“What do you have to say about him,
since he opened your eyes?”
He said, “He is a prophet.”

Now the Jews did not believe
that he had been blind and gained his sight
until they summoned the parents of the one who
had gained his sight.
They asked them,
“Is this your son, who you say was born blind?
How does he now see?”
His parents answered and said,
“We know that this is our son and that he was
born blind.
We do not know how he sees now,
nor do we know who opened his eyes.
Ask him, he is of age;
he can speak for himself.”
His parents said this because they were afraid
of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed
that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ,
he would be expelled from the synagogue.
For this reason his parents said,
“He is of age; question him.”

So a second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner." He replied, "If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see." So they said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again?"

Do you want to become his disciples, too?" They ridiculed him and said, "You are that man's disciple; we are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from." The man answered and said to them, "This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything." They answered and said to him, "You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, the one speaking with you is he." He said, "I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him.

Then Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind."

Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not also blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains.

4th Sunday of Lent

Two statements from this long gospel reading caught my attention, and I ask you for a moment to direct your attention to them. At one point the Pharisees question the blind man about Jesus: “*What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?*” And the man said: “*He is a prophet.*” Later in the reading, Jesus clearly states: “*I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see.*” I invite you to reflect with me about Jesus as a prophet who comes for judgment and what that might mean for us. What does a prophetic Jesus have to say about you and me, our country, our world? What is his judgment?

Think of all the major issues that used to fill the news prior to the spread of the Coronavirus. In light of the prophet Jesus and his judgment, how do we deal with matters like healthcare, refugees, hunger, border control, poverty, violence, and war? How are we to respond to these? What about our responsibility to one another? How might Jesus as prophet help us here? Clearly the Prophet Jesus and his judgment have something to say about what it means to be a neighbor, especially to those who differ from, frighten, or threaten us. And now we are confronted with a world-wide pandemic with a mounting death toll. The prophetic Jesus and his judgment have something to say about this too, especially the loss and fragility of life. What are the values that guide our lives and decision-making? What are faithful choices, and how are we to live? The One who comes for judgment can guide our way. We face these questions and issues as individuals, as a nation, and as a world. The scale might vary but the struggles are the same.

Prophets and judgment tend to make us a bit uncomfortable because they speak words we often do not want to hear and show us truths we often do not want to see. They ask us to change. And judgment often leaves us thinking about wrong-doing and punishment. Prophets generally do not work within the system, but often stand outside the system and work against the injustices and abuses perpetrated by the system. Prophets speak against that which diminishes human dignity and impoverishes life.

Think, for example, of the prophetic work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, in America, Gandhi in India, Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador, or Archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa. They called the people of those times and places to see anew and live differently. Behind each of

them stood the Prophet Jesus, and they made present his judgment. On a smaller, more personal scale you might think about the people who have spoken a difficult truth to you, or called you to change, or offered you words of consolation and hope-- and in doing so opened your eyes to a new life, a new seeing, a new understanding, a new faith. They, too, were prophets with whom Jesus stood. They, too, presented Jesus' judgment.

We don't often think or speak of Jesus as a prophet and yet that's exactly how the man who has been given new sight sees Jesus. "*He is a prophet,*" he tells the Pharisees. Jesus affirms the man's seeing. "*I came into this world for judgment,*" he says. That's what prophets do. They open our eyes to see what is, and present a vision of what might be: their judgment stands in the gap of those two. They call us back to our truer selves. Prophets remove the cataracts from our eyes and offer us clarity and insight. They challenge us to not look on outward appearances, but to look deeper-- to see as the Lord sees, and look on the heart of the person or situation (as illustrated through the choice of King David in the first scripture reading).

That's the judgment for which Jesus comes: that we might see the world, one another, and ourselves differently. The judgment for which Jesus comes into this world is not so much a judgment about good or bad, right or wrong, in or out, saved or damned. It is a judgment about our seeing. Today's gospel tells us the man born blind had his eyes opened, with the implication that they had been closed. This is not about physical sight. This is about spiritual seeing. Do we see with eyes opened or do we see with eyes closed? For most of us, I suspect, the answer is yes. Sometimes we see with our eyes open... and other times we see with our eyes closed. And Jesus is "calling all sinners" this Lent to see with our eyes open.

When we live and see with our eyes closed we withhold mercy, live in fear, and let anger control our lives. When we are unforgiving of ourselves or another we see with eyes closed. Sometimes we either refuse or are unable to see the pain or needs of another. We're too busy to respond, too important to deal with it, or too afraid to risk it. In those times we see with closed eyes. When we love ourselves more than our neighbor we are seeing with eyes closed, blind to the value of the other's life. When violence becomes our default response we are seeing with closed eyes. In all those and a thousand other ways we see with our eyes closed. We focus on the outward appearances but neither feel nor establish an inner connection with the person or situation.

Other times we recognize the injustice of a situation, we feel the other's pain as our own, and we see the needs and life of another as valuable and important as our own. In those times we are seeing with eyes open. When we offer peace, or forgive, or act with compassion we are seeing with eyes open. Our eyes open when the news of another bombing makes us sick to our stomach, when we reach out to make amends with someone we've hurt. In all those and a thousand other ways we see with our eyes open. In those times we are looking beyond outward appearances. We are seeing as God sees, and looking into the heart of the other person or the situation.

Jesus did not say that he came into this world to make judgments, but "for judgment." His judgment is not a series of individual decisions. Rather, his very life and presence are the judgment. And so: his Word is a judgment on our own words and the rhetoric of our leaders; his compassion is a judgment on our indifference and apathy; his justice is a judgment on our injustice; his nonviolence is a judgment on our violence; his mercy is a judgment on our condemnation; his welcome is a judgment on exclusion; his hope is a judgment on despair; his truth is a judgment on lies, falsehoods, and alternative facts; his seeing is a judgment on our blindness; and so on.

Everything about Jesus, his life, his words, his actions, are a judgment on our lives and world. That judgment offers us the chance to see as he sees, to live as he lives, and to be as he is. His judgment, however, is not an adjudication for the purpose of punishment. Rather, it is a diagnosis for the purpose of healing and life. Jesus always casts his judgment with an eye toward change and transformation. Its purpose is to show us the way, the truth, and the life, so that, by God's grace, we can begin to close the gap between what is and what might be.

Love lies at the heart of Jesus' judgment. With open eyes he sees in us more beauty, more goodness, more holiness, than we often see in ourselves and each other. He is "calling all sinners" to open our eyes to see anew: a new life, a new world, and new possibilities. What we often don't understand is that his judgment is in our favor and for our good even when it doesn't feel that way. He is a prophet who has come into this world for judgment.

Where does Jesus' judgment intersect your life or my life? What is it asking of us? Where does our seeing diverge from his seeing? What possibilities and hope does his judgment offer to us and our world? As the Pharisees say so famously in the end: "*Surely, we are not blind, are we?*"

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS
Fourth Sunday of Lent – 22 March 2020

PRESIDER:

We come to God seeking the healing and renewed sight that Jesus promised the man born blind, as we join in the response:

Lord, Hear Our Prayer.

LECTOR/DEACON:

For world leaders—that they may act in cooperation and solidarity to address the current health crisis gripping the human family, let us pray to the Lord:

For the Saint Katharine Drexel faith community— that we might find comfort in the strength of the connections we have to each other and to God in this time of uncertainty, let us pray to the Lord:

For all the ways we have become blind to the value and dignity of every human life, from conception to natural death, let us pray to the Lord:

For our scientists and all of our medical professionals who are working tirelessly to minimize the suffering resulting from this health crisis, let us pray to the Lord:

For all who are sick—that, like the man born blind, they might experience the power of Christ's healing presence in their lives, let us pray to the Lord:

For all who have died (*especially Patricia Caton*)-- that they might see the face of God in the eternal kingdom, let us pray to the Lord:

That God will hear the prayers we now hold in the silence of our hearts (*pause... ..*), let us pray to the Lord:

PRESIDER:

Loving God—grant us the strength we need to persevere. We ask this through Christ our Lord. (Amen)