

Sunday, March 22, 2020
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

I 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."

² 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.'

³ 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."

⁴ 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?"

⁵ 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.

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

⁷ 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."

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

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

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

¹¹ 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."

¹² 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."

¹³ 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.

- What makes David so special in the eyes of God?
- Saul was God's first choice for King but that didn't work out too well. Reflect on what it means that God made a second choice.

Psalm 23 ([link to youtube recording](#))

<A Psalm of David.> The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

³ he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

- This is one of the most beloved pieces of scripture. Take some time to think about why that is.

Ephesians 5:8-14

⁷ Therefore do not be associated with them.

⁸ For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light--

⁹ for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.

¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

¹² For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly;

¹³ but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,

¹⁴ for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

- These are challenging words. How might you meet this challenge?

John 9:1-41

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

² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

³ Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.

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

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

⁶ 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,

⁷ saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

⁸ 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?"

⁹ Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man."

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

¹¹ 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."

¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

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

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

¹⁵ 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."

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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."

¹⁸ 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

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

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

²¹ 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."

²² 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.

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

²⁴ 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."

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

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

²⁷ 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?"

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

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

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

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

³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind."

³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

³⁴ They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

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

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

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

³⁸ He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.

³⁹ 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."

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

⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

- Why did the disciples blame the man's blindness on sin?
- The blind man's parents are questioned as to what really happened. Why was there so much doubt?
- Wouldn't the Pharisees know if they were blind?

Prayers of Intercession

Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

God of insight, open the hearts of the church and the world to all who testify to your deeds of power like Jonathan Edwards, whom we commemorate today. Raise up voices in your church that are often silenced or overlooked due to age, gender expression, race, or economic status. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of insight, empower us to care for the land and all living things that dwell in it and beneath it. Provide rich soil for crops to grow. Bring rain to lands suffering drought. Protect hills and shorelines from damage caused by erosion. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of insight, bring peace to all people and nations. Anoint leaders who seek goodness, righteousness, and truth on behalf of all. Frustrate the efforts of those who would seek to cause violence or terror. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of insight, you care for our needs even before we ask. Come quickly to all who seek prayer this day. Hear the names of those we lift up before you now... Accomplish healing through the work of doctors, nurses, physical therapists, nutritionists, and all who tend to human bodies. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of insight, help this assembly lift up the unique gifts of each person who enters, no matter their physical capacity, cognitive ability, or sensory need. Help us to be creative and brave in making our facilities and our ministries accessible to all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of insight, you call out to those who are asleep and awaken them to new life with you. We give thanks for your saints especially ... Join us together with them as your children in this world and the next. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

+ + + + +

Upcoming Commemorations

Jonathan Edwards, teacher, missionary to American Indians, died 1758 - Sunday, March 22, 2020

A Puritan minister in Connecticut, Edwards is remembered as being a great preacher. Though his most famous sermon talks at length about hell, he was more concerned with God's love. He served both as missionary to the Housatonic people in Massachusetts, and as president of the future Princeton University.

Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, died 1980 - Tuesday, March 24, 2020

Romero was deeply concerned with injustices evident toward the poor and powerless in El Salvador, and worked forthrightly against political repression. He was assassinated while presiding at the eucharist in a chapel near the cathedral in San Salvador.

Annunciation of Our Lord - Wednesday, March 25, 2020

Nine months before Christmas we celebrate the annunciation, in which the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the Son of God. The ancient church believed that this was also the date of the world's creation and of Jesus' death on the cross.

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound

1 A - maz - ing grace!— how sweet the sound— that
 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and
 3 Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares I
 4 The Lord has prom - ised good to me; his
 5 When we've been there ten thou - sand years, bright

saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
 grace my fears re - lieved; how pre - cious did that
 have al - read - y come; 'tis grace has brought me
 word my hope se - cures; he will my shield and
 shin - ing as the sun, we've no less days to

now am found; was blind, but now I see.
 grace ap - pear the hour I first be - lieved!
 safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
 por - tion be as long as life en - dures.
 sing God's praise than when we'd first be - gun.