

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

The Fourth Sunday in Lent (A)

1 Samuel 16.1-13

Psalm 23

Ephesians 5.8-14

John 9.1-41

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**1 Samuel 16.1-13**

1. This passage begins the “History of David’s Rise,” a pre-canonical document ending in 2 Sam. 5, that concludes with the northern tribes anointing David.
  - a. The “History” tells of the struggles between David and Saul, and the increasing recognition by all sorts of people—Jonathan, Michal, Abigail, Saul himself, and God—that David will be king.
  - b. There are three accounts of David's anointing altogether: this pericope, 2 Samuel 5, and 2 Samuel 2, where David is anointed by Judah after the death of Saul.
2. Samuel acts under divine orders and with some danger. To anoint a new king could be interpreted as an act of treason. Samuel covers his tracks by claiming that he is going to Bethlehem to perform a sacrifice to the LORD.
3. None of the first seven sons of Jesse—only the first three are given names—prove satisfactory. While outwardly impressive, they are rejected because the LORD can judge their inner intentions or character, that is, their heart. According to 1 Chr 2:13-5, David was the seventh son.
  - a. Already in the Pentateuch many younger sons are preferred over their elder brothers—Isaac, Jacob, Perez, Judah. This choice often results from a pre-natal call or blessing and expresses the election of the person.
    - i. After some discussion, David, the shepherd boy, is sent for, and Samuel anoints him. The spirit of God descends on David. Saul, too, had this spirit, but the kings beginning with Solomon did not have the spirit—they were kings because their father had been king. According to Isa. 11:2, the messianic king will be blessed with the spirit.

**Psalm 23**

1. The psalm may be read to be composed of three sections: a Confessional Statement; an Affirmation of Confidence; and an Expression of Hope.
  - a. Compare Psalm 23 to Mark 6.30-44 (the miracle of the loaves and fishes).
    - i. Although Jesus is described in a “lonely place” (Greek = *aramón*, a “wilderness,” as in a desert), the people are described as sitting in companies on the “green grass”!
    - ii. Jesus is described as taking pity on the crowd, because they “have no shepherd”.
2. Confessional Statement:
  - a. The LORD is my shepherd; I lack nothing!
  - b. The LORD makes me lie down in grassy pastures;
    - i. He leads me alongside restful waters;
    - ii. He brings me back to wholeness;

- iii. He guides me in safe tracks [or obedient paths];
  - iv. in order to maintain the reputation of the Name the LORD.
3. Affirmation of Confidence:
- a. I will fear no calamity, despite danger.
  - b. The Hebrew word for evil is an phonetic cognate of the name of the Egyptian god “Ra”.
  - c. The LORD is with me.
    - i. He provides blessings and comfort.
4. Expression of Hope:
- a. The LORD’s goodness and steadfast love shall keep me, and He will keep me for all my life.

### **Ephesians 5.8-14**

1. Paul contrasts those who live in “darkness” (*i.e.*, they disobey God), with those who live in “light,” “in the Lord”.
  - a. This follows his earlier exhortation (in ch. 4) that we must conduct ourselves ethically, as befits those who have adopted the way of Christ and “put away your former way of life” (Eph. 4.22).
  - b. We have been “clothed in the new self” (4.24) when we were sealed in baptism (4.30).
2. As those who now live in Christ and have received the Holy Spirit, we are to expose the works of evil.
  - a. We are to seek what God would have us do (the “light”).
3. God knows evil deeds.
  - a. As stated by Matthew Henry: “We must have not only a sight and a knowledge that sin is sin, and in some measure shameful, but see it as a breach of God's holy law. After the example of prophets and apostles, we should call on those asleep and dead in sin, to awake and arise, that Christ may give them light.”

### **John 9.1-41**

1. This story of the healing of the blind man may be contrasted with that found at Mark 10.46-52.
  - a. In Mark the blind man, Bartimaeus, makes a fuss over Jesus to attract His attention. He addresses Jesus by a messianic title.
    - i. Jesus heals him, and tells him that his faith has made him well.
  - b. Here, the blind man expresses nothing to Jesus, but obeys His command.
2. John uses this story as setting for one of the seven “I AM” sayings of Jesus, in which He identifies Himself by the Holy Name. (Compare John 8.12, where this story thread really begins.)
  - a. Jesus now says that He (I AM) is the light of the world.
    - i. The Light is manifested in the opening of the eyes of the blind man, and in his testimony to the Pharisees.

- ii. This testimony is rejected. The blind man is cast out of the synagogue.
    - 1. The Light is rejected by those who love darkness, and cling to human ways.
- 3. At the end of this story the blind man encounters Jesus again. He tells Him, “Lord, I believe” and *worships* Him.
  - a. This is the first instance in the Gospel of Jesus being accorded worship, and prefigures the use by Thomas of the “highest” Christological title, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20.28).
  - b. Before the blind man knew Jesus he called Him “Rabbi”.
    - i. Once he met Jesus he called Him a “prophet”.
    - ii. Now he calls Him “Lord”.
      - 1. This development in faith is that to which we are all called.
- 4. Jesus responds to this worship by stating that He “... came into this world for judgment ...”
  - a. This verse summarizes the whole story. Jesus, as the Son of Man, is the judge of people’s hearts. Jesus was sent from God to earth so that people would come to know the truth about God.
    - i. Jesus came to this earth to bring light to every human being (John 1.9).