

Sunday, March 26, 2017
Fourth Sunday in Lent

INTRODUCTION

Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. I was blind, but now I see, declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God's beloved sons and daughters. As David was anointed king of Israel, in baptism God anoints our head with oil, and calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives.

PRELUDE

"In Paradisum"

Jean Bouvard

***GATHERING SONG "God, Whose Almighty Word"**

ELW 673

**God, whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard
and took their flight:
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light.**

**Christ, who once came to bring,
on your redeeming wing,
healing and sight;
health to the troubled mind,
sight where illusions blind;
oh, now to humankind
let there be light.**

**Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy dove,
speed forth your flight;
move on the water's face
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light.**

**Holy and blessed three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might:
boundless as ocean's tide,
rolling in fullest pride,
through the earth, far and wide,
let there be light.**

***GREETING**

℟ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

☩ **And also with you**

***KYRIE**

℟ *In peace, let us pray to the Lord.*

☩ **Lord, have mercy.**

℟ *For the peace from above,
and for our salvation,
let us pray to the Lord.*

☩ **Lord, have mercy.**

℟ *For the peace of the whole world,
for the well-being of the Church of God,
and for the unity of all,
let us pray to the Lord.*

☩ **Lord, have mercy.**

℟ *For this holy house,
and for all who offer here their worship and praise,
let us pray to the Lord.*

☩ **Lord, have mercy.**

℟ *Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.*

☩ **Amen.**

***CANTICLE OF PRAISE "Now The Feast And Celebration"**

ELW 167

Refrain

**Now the feast and celebration,
all of creation sings for joy
to the God of life and love and freedom;
praise and glory forevermore!**

**Now is the feast of the Lamb once slain,
whose blood has freed and united us
to be one great people of God. *Refrain***

**Power and riches, wisdom and might,
all honor and glory to Christ forever. *Refrain***

**For God has come to dwell with us,
to make us people of God;
to make all things new. *Refrain***

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

℟ *Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ,*

☩ **and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light**

into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen!

ANTHEM

"Jesus Is a Rock in a Weary Land"

Kyle Johnson

Jeff Langdon, soloist
Chancel Choir

FIRST READING

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Samuel anointed David even though he was the eighth-oldest son of Jesse and did not match his brothers in height or other physical characteristics. With the anointing came endowment with the Spirit of the Lord, designating David as the Lord's chosen successor to Saul.

¹The 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." ²Samuel 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.'" ³Invite 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." ⁴Samuel 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?" ⁵He 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.

⁶When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is now before the LORD." ⁷But 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." ⁸Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." ⁹Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." ¹⁰Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these." ¹¹Samuel 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." ¹²He 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." ¹³Then 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.

Reflection

The story of the fall of Saul and the rise of David as King of Israel is one of the most enthralling stories in the Bible, as far as I'm concerned. One of the reasons I like it so much is that it raises questions—the kinds of questions that to me make reading the Bible so interesting. It's a combination of "holy history" and naked politics. You can read the story of Saul's kingship from 1 Samuel 9-15. Who chose Saul to be king? (see 1 Samuel 9:15-17) What happened to Saul? (1 Samuel 15:10-35) Did God make a mistake? What do you think? Our text for today is what happens next. To whom does the Lord send Samuel? (verse 1) What is Samuel afraid of? (verse 2—This is not an idle fear—Saul was as jealous of his kingship as any ruler of today!) What are God's instructions to Samuel? (verses 2-5) Who does Samuel think God

will choose? (verses 6-10) Why? (verses 6-7) Who does God choose? (verses 11-13) If you didn't know the story already, would this surprise you? What was his work? What do you know about him? If you want to read the whole story of how David becomes king and what happens, read all of 1 and 2 Samuel. It's a good story, although not always particularly moral!

PSALM 23

¹The LORD | is my shepherd;
I shall not | be in want.

²**The LORD makes me lie down | in green pastures
and leads me be- | side still waters.**

³You restore my | soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways | for your 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.**

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence | of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is | running over.

⁶**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the
days | of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the | LORD forever.**

Reflection

This psalm is the most well-known psalm in the Bible. Who wrote it? (see the "title") What is the psalmist's relationship with God? Is it surprising to see a shepherd king taking the part of the flock of sheep? If you haven't memorized this psalm yet, you might like to. It's a good one to have in your memory bank. What is your favorite part of this psalm?

SECOND READING

Ephesians 5:8-14

Because we now live in the divine light that is Jesus Christ, we conduct our lives in ways that reflect the light of Christ, so that our activity is truly pleasing to God.

⁸Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—⁹for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; ¹³but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Sleeper, awake!

Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

Reflection

What does the writer of Ephesians say happens to us when we become Christians? (verse 9) What does it mean to be darkness? to be light? How do children of light live? (verses 8-10) What do you think the “unfruitful works of darkness” are? For what the writer thinks they are, see Ephesians 4:14, 17-19, 31, among other places in Ephesians. What does the writer say about the works of darkness? (verses 13-14) In your life and experience, how is darkness overcome by light?

**Return to the Lord, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love.**

GOSPEL

John 9:1-41

Jesus heals a man born blind, provoking a hostile reaction that he regards as spiritual blindness to the things of God.

¹As [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, ⁷saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸The 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?” ⁹Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” ¹⁰But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹He 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.” ¹²They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵Then 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.” ¹⁶Some 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. ¹⁷So 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.”

¹⁸The 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 ¹⁹and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but 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.” ²²His 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. ²³Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴So 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.” ²⁵He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” ²⁷He 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?” ²⁸Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” ³⁰The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes

from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” ³⁴They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” ³⁸He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus 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.” ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” ⁴¹Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

Reflection

Who do the disciples see? (verse 1) The disciples ask Jesus a theological question about this man. What is it? (verse 2) Jesus does not see a theological question; what does he see? (verse 3) When he sees darkness, what does this mean to him? (verses 4-5) What does he do? (verses 6-7) What do his neighbors (who are not born blind) see or not see? What is their question? (verses 8-12) To whom do they bring the man? (verse 13) What do they see—a person or a question about the law? (verses 13-16) Divisions begin to appear among the Pharisees. What do they argue about? (verse 16) We begin to see the man begin to see more clearly. Who does he say Jesus is? (verse 17) This becomes a sort of trial of the man who had been touched by Jesus. Who do the Jews summon as witnesses? (Notice the change in what they are called by John the Gospel writer—the word he often uses to denote those who are in authority opposed to Jesus.) What do they ask them? (verses 18-19) What do they say about the man who was born blind? (verses 20-21) Why? (verses 22-23) Now the authorities re-call the man. What is their prosecution statement? (verse 24) What does the man say? (verse 25) They continue to argue with him. (verses 26-33) How does this “trial” end? (verse 34) Who was blind at the beginning of the story? Who is blind at the end of the story? What is Jesus’ response to this? (verses 35-37) How does this story illustrate the children of light and darkness (from the Ephesians text)? What does Jesus say about the judgment of this world? (verses 39-41) Who “decides” on the judgment against the Pharisees? (verse 41) What responsibility do we have as disciples of Jesus to live as children of light? Who gives us the “ability” to live in the light?

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Kris Langdon

SERMON

"Anointing of God's Peace and Light"

Rev. Roger Lenander

SONG OF THE DAY

"Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound"

ELW 779

**Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
was blind, but now I see.**

**'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;**

how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me;
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we'd first begun.

***APOSTLES' CREED**

pg. 105

☒ I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen!

***PRAYER SONG** *"Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus"*

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Lifting our voices and turning toward God, let us pray for the church, the earth, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

God of the ages, as your church prepares your table for all to celebrate in one holy meal, restore the unity of those who gather in your name. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You shed light on your creation. Let the changing of the seasons bring forth growth and new life from what was dormant and fallow. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Shine your light on the people of every nation. Reveal your reconciling love in places where fear and conflict thrive. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

O God, you are the strength of the weak and the comfort of sufferers: hear our prayers and grant your healing for those who may be sick or in pain. *We especially pray for Trisha, Samantha, Bob, Sheylin, Terry, Stephanie, Dorothy, Linda, Scott, Alva.* We also pray for those we name before you aloud or silently in our hearts (*pause for 10 seconds*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Restore, renew, and enliven the ministry and work of this congregation. Help us to see your purpose clearly. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We remember and give thanks for those who have joined you in eternal light. Let their lives of faith shine in our hearts and guide our paths. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Into your hands, merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your steadfast love; through Christ our Lord.

Amen!

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

☞ The peace of Christ be with you always.

☞ **And also with you!**

OFFERTORY

"Be Thou My Vision"

arr. Mark Hayes

Praise Band

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE**

"Praise to you, O God of Mercy" vv. 1

Praise to you, O God of mercy:

thanks be to you forever!

Raising high the weak and lowly:

thanks be to you forever!

Thanks be to you forever!

***OFFERING PRAYER**

P *Merciful God,*

C **receive the sacrifice of our praise and thanksgiving and the offering of our lives, that following in the way of the cross, we may know the joy of the resurrection; through Christ our Lord. Amen!**

***DIALOGUE**

P *The Lord be with you.*

C **And also with you.**

P *Lift up your hearts.*

C **We lift them to the Lord.**

P *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

C **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

***PREFACE**

P *It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.
You call your people to cleanse their hearts
and prepare with joy for the paschal feast,
that, renewed in the gift of baptism,
we may come to the fullness of your grace.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:*

***HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

**Holy, holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy is our God,
God, the Lord of earth and heaven.
Holy, holy is our God.**

***THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

P *Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
who preached good news to the poor,
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.
In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.
Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,*

*and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.
Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.
Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,
and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,
the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory, now and forever.*

☩ Amen!

***LORD'S PRAYER**

**☩ Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen!**

***INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

☩ *Return to God with all your heart.
Receive bread for the journey, drink for the desert.*

COMMUNION

***BLESSING**

☩ *The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and
keep you in his grace.*

☩ Amen!

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

☩ *Compassionate God,*
**☩ you have fed us with the bread of heaven. Sustain us in our Lenten
pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for justice, our alms, a
making of peace, and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts;
through Christ our Lord. Amen!**

***BENEDICTION**

☞ *May God who has called us forth from the dust of the earth,
and claimed us as children of the light,
strengthen you on your journey into life renewed.
The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine upon you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor
and give you ☩ peace.*

☞ **Amen!**

***SENDING SONG "We Are Marching in the Light of God"**

**We are marching in the light of God,
we are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God,
we are marching in the light of God.**

**We are marching, we are marching, Oh!
we are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, we are marching, Oh!
we are marching in the light of God.**

Additional stanzas ad lib:

**We are dancing . . .
We are praying . . .
We are singing . . .**

***DISMISSAL**

☞ *Marked with the cross of Christ,
go forth to love and serve the Lord.*

☞ **Thanks be to God!**