

Resources for Parish Worship



This week's Gospel reading could offer a year's worth of sermons! The story of the blind man who is healed by Jesus, and the subsequent investigation by the Pharisees is so rich in detail, so filled with metaphor and symbol, so compelling in its narrative that preaching it is both easy and very, very difficult. The problem is not so much what to say, as what not to include. I hope you have fun with it!

Of course, you may not be using the Gospel reading. But even if this is the case, the focus on seeing, perception and whether we live in 'light' or 'darkness' flows throughout.

May our eyes be opened in new ways to God's glory, God's light and our place in God's purposes as we worship this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

The First Reading - 1 Samuel 16: 1-13

God instructs Samuel to stop mourning for Saul and to anoint a new king for Israel in Bethlehem. After examining seven of Jesse's sons and rejecting them, Samuel finally anoints the youngest boy, David, and God's Spirit comes upon him.

The Psalm - Psalm 23

David's Psalm of praise for the God who cares for him like a shepherd, providing nurture, peace, care, protection and an eternal place of belonging.

The Second Reading - Ephesians 5: 8-14

Paul encourages the believers to live as people of the light, doing what pleases God.

The Gospel Reading - John 9: 1-41

Jesus heals a man who was born blind, and, because his was done on the Sabbath, the religious leaders start an investigation, calling in the man's parents and ultimately throwing the man out of the synagogue. Then, Jesus teaches that he came to bring sight to the blind and to reveal the blindness of those who think they see.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=1%20Samuel%2016:%201-13%0Acw%20Psalm%2023%0AEphesians%205:%208-14%0AJohn%209:%201-41

LECTIONARY NOTES

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Blindness and sight, light and darkness, rejection of those in power and anointing of those who are unknown – these are the threads in the Lectionary readings of this week. The heart of the theme is this: how do we choose to see? Samuel is tempted to look at Jesse's sons in an ordinary human way – outward strength and primacy in the family hierarchy – but God commands him to look differently, ultimately choosing the son who is the least. Paul encourages believers to walk in God's light, avoiding the "deeds of darkness" that cause brokenness, stumbling and pain, but rather seeking to live in the light – seeing clearly and moving securely through the world because we can see. David's famous psalm gives a picture of what this "living in the light" looks like – being shepherded by God in grace and nurture. Finally, and most importantly, the Gospel uses a dramatic story to show the difference between those who claim to see but don't, and those who truly can see. The corruption, power-grabbing and judgmental condemnation of anything new and different is a mark of those who cannot see – although they always protest that they see clearly. On the other hand, the acceptance, healing and grace that Jesus shows – and the response in worship of those who have been made to see by Christ's touch – is the mark of those who "live

in the light". Our choice, then, as individuals and as Church, is whether we will allow God's light to change how we see, or whether we will go through the motions and continue to see as the rest of society does, while claiming falsely that we see as God does.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: Perception is everything. It's not just what we see or don't see, but how we interpret what we see that determines our actions, our responses and our beliefs. We can look at the poor and see unfortunate victims of circumstance, or lazy people who refuse to work, or dignified human beings making the most of a tough situation. We can look at climate science and see a natural cycle which has just happened to hit us now, or human actions putting our planet under pressure. We can look at issues of sexuality, consumption, energy, immigration, health care, abortion, and capital punishment and see every issue from different perspectives. Ultimately, how we determine what we see and what it means must flow from Christ's example. How did Christ address poverty? How did Christ view the natural world, sexuality, power, violence, sickness, and human dignity? Of course, even when it comes to Christ there are problems of perspective, but if we are to follow Christ into a world of justice, we will have to wrestle with these questions and not see them as outside of the realm of faith. Of course, once we have seen, we also have the task of helping others – our leaders, our neighbours, our children – to see as well. We can do this through coercion (like the religious leaders tried with the man Jesus healed) or we can do it through simple gracious action that opens eyes, as Jesus did. Of one thing we can be certain, though, if we are to learn from this week's readings: we do not see, in our natural human capacity, as God does, and so if we are beginning to see clearly, it will almost certainly lead us to see the world and its systems differently from the dominant view. And this seeing, will inevitably work itself out in a new way of navigating the world as well as we recognise the need and the calling for us to act on what we see.

LOCAL APPLICATION: In our daily lives we all make choices (consciously or subconsciously) about what we will see and what we won't. It's tempting to choose not to see the suffering and injustice in our world – to switch off the news, and to ignore reports of grief, war and trauma. It's tempting to avoid seeing certain people and to allow them to just blend in with the landscape, removing their need and struggle from our vision. It's tempting to avoid seeing God's truth and grace in those we disagree with, and who we would rather see as "all bad". It's tempting to avoid seeing the brokenness in those we support and agree with and to see them as "all good". It's tempting to avoid seeing the resources, the opportunities and the capacity we have for making a difference, and to rather believe we can do nothing. But, if we have really

seen Jesus, and if we have truly seen God's reign proclaimed and manifest in Christ, then we have to confront how we see things, and allow God's grace and mercy, God's truth and justice to change our seeing and shed light on our world, our relationships and our neighbourhoods. And, once again, our seeing must be informed by God's different perspective where the greatest are the least, and where everyone – even a young shepherd boy, or a carpenter from the countryside – can make significant differences in the world.

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God,
that we, who for our evil deeds
do worthily deserve to be punished,
by the comfort of thy grace may mercifully be relieved;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Collect Two

Lord God
whose blessed Son our Saviour
gave his back to the smiters
and did not hide his face from shame:
Give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time
with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

God of compassion,
whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary,
shared the life of a home in Nazareth,
and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself:
Strengthen us in our daily living
that in joy and in sorrow
we may know the power of your presence
to bind together and to heal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

A: Through baptism, we have been made children of God. Let us, therefore,
be

bold to offer our prayers to the One who stoops to hear us. We pray,
"Through
Christ our Lord," and respond, "Amen."

A: Let us pray for the unity of the church.

P: Bountiful God, we pray for the church, present in many nations and many denominations. Restore our vision that we might see in one another the variety and bounty of your kingdom. We pray through Christ our Lord, C: Amen.

A: Let us pray for countries where the truth is suppressed.

P: God of Righteousness, as Jesus' followers suffered for speaking the truth, so do many others today. Support and uphold those who are prisoners of conscience and victims of political corruption, even as you lead us to work for their liberation. We pray through Christ our Lord, C: Amen.

A: Let us pray for all those in need of healing.

P: Merciful God, grant comfort to the suffering and health to the sick. Shore up all those who falter that, whatever their condition, your love may bring them joy. We pray through Christ our Lord, C: Amen.

A: Let us pray for the courage to speak of our faith.

P: Patient God, give us faith like that of the man born blind, that we might speak courageously of your presence with us. We pray through Christ our Lord, C: Amen.

A: Let us pray for catechumens, confirmands and all who study God's word.

P: God of Wisdom, stir up the spirits of all who seek to know you more fully, especially _____, that they might long for a clearer vision of your truth. We pray through Christ our Lord, C: Amen.

P: We commend all for whom we pray into your care through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

In peace, we pray to you, Lord God.

For all people in their daily life and work;

for our families, friends and neighbours, and for those who are alone.

For this community, our country, and the world;

for all who work for justice, freedom and peace.

For the just and proper use of your creation;

for the victims of hunger, fear, injustice and oppression.

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;

for those who minister to the sick, the friendless and the needy.

For the peace and unity of the Church of God;

for all who proclaim the gospel, and for all seek the truth, for all who serve God in the church.

For our own needs, and for others for whom you have called us to pray.

[Silence]

Hear us, Lord

for your mercy is great.

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of life.

[Silence]

We exalt you, O God our king;

and praise your name for ever and ever.

We give thanks for all those who have died in the peace of Christ, and for the promise of your eternal kingdom.

[Silence]

In Christ you have called us to eternal glory;

to you be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 3

Let us bring before the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the faces we know well, those we know a little, those on whom we have passed hasty judgement, and faces to whom we cannot put a name. And let us seek God's blessing on all.

The kindly faces who have loved and nurtured us; family, friends, neighbours and workmates, those on earth and those in heaven.

Give them and us good sight, loving God,
And may we all see your glory

The faces of opponents who have mocked us or shunned us, abused us or betrayed us, exploited or ignored us.

Give them and us good sight, loving God,
And may we all see your glory.

The TV faces of hungry children overseas, or street kids in our cities, or aboriginal children living in squalor.

Give them and us good sight, loving God,
And may we all see your glory.

The faces of our elected politicians, State and Federal, Government and Opposition, minor parties and independents.

Give them and us good sight, loving God,
And may we all see your glory.

The glossy magazine faces of sporting idols and film stars, royalty and fashion models, and the newspaper faces of those who have fallen into public shame.

Give them and us good sight, loving God,
And may we all see your glory.

The faces of those whom we have ignored or injured, or who have been the target of our superficial judgement or gossip.

Give them and us good sight, loving God,
And may we all see your glory.

The faces of those within this church who have been an inspiration to us, and those who more often get under our skin and annoy us.

Give them and us good sight, loving God,
And may we all see your glory.

Loving God, these are all your children, cherished with a priceless love. Through each of them, and through your whole human family, let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Then indeed we shall be blest beyond anything we can as yet see or imagine. Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen!

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 4

Presider or deacon

Jesus anointed the eyes of the man born blind. As we prepare for the paschal feast, let us earnestly beseech God to give new sight to all peoples everywhere.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy catholic church throughout the world, sharing the death and resurrection of Christ.

Lord, have mercy.

For *N* our bishop, for presbyters and deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Lord, have mercy.

For *NN* our catechumen(s) and *NN* their sponsors(s).

Lord, have mercy.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

Lord, have mercy.

For justice, mercy, and peace in all the world.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who are sick, afflicted, or oppressed.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For our families, friends, and companions, and for all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Remembering, name of *Parish patronal*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Blessed are you, God of Samuel and David, who gives us the light of the world in Jesus the Anointed One. Receive the prayers we offer this day for those in need in every place and anoint the head of all who come to your table; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 5

P Let us pray for the temporal and eternal needs of both Church and world.

P For bold, unwavering trust in God's grace, that we may rejoice in all the good gifts from above that we neither merit nor deserve, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

- P For the faithful proclamation of Christ's saving name, that God's people may be strengthened in the true faith and His Gospel kingdom extended to all nations, to the very ends of the earth, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- P For this congregation, its mission and its people; for the ability to meet the needs that arise as we do the work God has given us to do; and for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- P For the educational institutions of our church: that all the baptized, both those who teach and those who learn in them, would be transformed by the wisdom of Christ, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- P For all who partake this day of Christ's holy body and blood, that in their eating and drinking they may receive the benefits of forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life and have a foretaste of the feast to come, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- P For the President, Congress, and Judiciary of the United States, for the Governor and Legislature of this state, for all government agencies, civil servants, judges, and officers of the law, that peace, security, and justice may be preserved, allowing freedom and opportunity to share the good news of the message of Christ, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- P For those who are sick (*especially* _____), that God would grant healing to their bodies and strength to bear their infirmities with patience and grace, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- P For all who mourn the loss of family and friends (*especially for* _____), that they may find comfort in the communion of saints, forgiveness of sins, and resurrection of the body, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- P For those who suffer from the lack of any human necessity, that those who have been blessed with an abundance may cheerfully share, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who rejoice in the rich blessings of God, that they may always remember the Giver of every gift and give Him heartfelt thanks, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P O Lord God of heaven and earth, merciful and gracious, holy and loving, graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, our once-for-all sacrifice for sin. Remember not our sins, but forgive, renew, and strengthen us to fight the good fight of the faith. Protect us from the assaults and temptations of the devil, the world, and even our own sinful flesh. Grant us repentance and faith, holy lives to match godly intentions, and perseverance until You return or call us home, for to You alone we give all glory, honour, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Father,
through your goodness
we are refreshed through your Son
in word and sacrament.
May our faith be so strengthened and guarded
that we may witness to your eternal love
by our words and in our lives.
Grant this for Jesus' sake, our Lord.

and/or

Loving God,
as a mother feeds her children at the breast,
you feed us in this sacrament with spiritual food and drink.
Help us who have tasted your goodness
to grow in grace within the household of faith;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

God of wilderness and water,
your Son was baptized and tempted as we are.

Guide us through this season,
that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.

Artist of souls,
you sculpted a people for yourself
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity,
that the discipline of these forty days
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship,
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

God of the covenant,
in the glory of the cross
your Son embraced the power of death
and broke its hold over your people.
In this time of repentance,
draw all people to yourself,
that we who confess Jesus as Lord
may put aside the deeds of death
and accept the life of your kingdom. Amen.

God of the living,
through baptism we pass from the shadow of death
to the light of the resurrection.
Remain with us and give us hope
that, rejoicing in the gift of the Spirit
who gives life to our mortal flesh,
we may be clothed with the garment of immortality,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

My brothers and sisters:
reconciled to God by the mercy of Christ,
we pray with confidence for the needs of the church and the world.
Through Christ you make us a new creation, O God,
for with him we pass from sin to the new life of grace.
Accept our prayers in the warm embrace of your compassion,
and welcome all people to the festive banquet of your table,
where we may rejoice in your love

and celebrate the inheritance you have given to us.
We ask t his through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Discerner of hearts,
you look beneath our outward appearance
and see your image in each of us.
Banish in us the blindness
that prevents us from recognizing truth,
so we may see the world through your eyes
and with the compassion of Jesus Christ who redeems us. Amen.

SERMON OUTLINE

John 9:1-41 *As he walked along...*

We share a controversial encounter one day in Jerusalem featuring Jesus, a blind man and the Jews – as Jesus demonstrates a wonderful truth:- *I am the light of the world...*

1. Physical Blindness 1-25: *a man blind from birth...*

a) the Blind Man – 1-12: miraculously healed by Jesus - *he spat on the ground & made mud with the saliva & spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' he went and washed and came back able to see.*

b) Blinkered Men -13-29: Pharisees & enemies of Jesus – could only heal if there s danger of a patient dying - *'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.'*

i) Question of the Pharisees -15: *the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight...*

ii) Query of others -16: *How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided...*

iii) Quizzing of the parents – 19:. *Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?'*

iv) Quotation of the man -25: *I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know that though I was blind now I see – the best answer for blinkered men who do not want to see...*

2. Spiritual Blindness 26-41: *as they say:- 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.'*

a) Jesus

Promotes Healing for the Sick – He meets the man again & develops his faith in *the Son of Man?* – so that he is able to proclaim *'Lord, I believe.'* *And he worshipped him.*

b) Jesus Promises Hope for the Soul – to all who believe: - ³⁹*Jesus said, ‘I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.’* May He save us from Spiritual Blindness!

SERMON

Be joyful

BY THE REV. DR. FRANK HEGEDUS

1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

In many cultures of the world, the first day of April is kept as April Fools' Day, a day for shenanigans, generalized tomfoolery, and practical jokes played on unsuspecting family members, friends, and co-workers. Most of us have been at one time or another the butt of someone's silly pranks on this day, perhaps even as recently as this past Friday, and we have probably taken it in stride – even giving as good as we got – all in good fun.

It seems somehow appropriate that at least one day a year should serve to remind us not to take ourselves too seriously. After all, many people in today's busy world assume the duties and responsibilities of work and family life with a grim determination that seems to leave little room for humour or amusement. What better remedy than a day that dares to poke fun at our self-importance and pretensions?

Oddly, no one is quite sure of the origin of April Fools' Day – called All Fools' Day in some places – although theories abound. In the English-speaking world, the day and its inanities are attested at least as far back as Chaucer's time in the fourteenth century. But similar customs are found throughout the world. April Fools' Day has not yet made it into the calendar of the church year, though – bearing in mind the current “whole state of Christ's Church and the world” – its time may be coming. It is not for nothing that Paul unabashedly calls us “fools for Christ.”

In fact, rank foolishness in religious matters goes back at least as far as Hebrew times.

Consider our reading today from First Samuel, a work that, among other things, recounts the history of kingship in ancient Israel. The Lord sends the prophet Samuel in search of a new king – even though Saul is still very much alive and on the throne. Samuel must surely have thought the Lord was joking, pulling a fast one on him. Perhaps he even checked his calendar to assure himself that it was not the first of April. “How can I go?” he asks with trepidation. “If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” Alas, as it turns out, the Lord is not joking. And, off Samuel goes on his implausible search for a new king.

The story and its improbability – call it foolishness if you like – does not end there. Intent on his mission from the Lord, Samuel gets up close and personal with all of Jesse’s fine sons, each in turn passing before his inspection. Any one of them might have made an excellent king for the Lord’s people. Any one of them, that is, except for the youngest, David, whom their father does not even bother to bring before Samuel’s gaze. Too young, Jesse must have thought, too inexperienced and unschooled in the ways of the world, too much dirt under his fingernails. Yet, foolish and silly as it may seem, it is precisely David who is to be king. “Rise and anoint him,” says the Lord without cracking a smile, “This is the one.” No fooling.

It seems our human judgment is all too often imprudently blind to the wisdom of the Lord masquerading at times as human folly. Perhaps we all need to become more mindful of the Lord’s “foolish” ways if we ourselves want to be truly wise.

That seems to be the lesson of today’s gospel account – the story of the man born blind and his healing. But his healing and the return of his sight is not the only wonder in the story. More astonishing still is the inability of the blind man’s neighbors and the Pharisees to recognize the hand of the Lord at work in their very midst. Like a first-century version of Dr. House and his team of medical specialists, they attempt again and again to diagnose the undiagnosable. They go over every possibility and contingency. They visit family and neighbors. They consider each detail of the blind man’s history, symptoms, and healing. Perhaps he was not really blind to begin with, they speculate. Perhaps on the other hand he was “born entirely in sins.” Maybe the return of his sight had something to do with the mud in his eyes or the waters of Siloam in which he bathed. Or maybe not.

But what they refuse to see is the obvious: the plain truth of the Lord’s gracious goodness at work in the lives of his people – specifically in the life of this blind man who asks nothing of Jesus but is nevertheless gratuitously, one might even say foolishly, given his sight simply “so that God’s works might be revealed in him.” No questions asked. No demands made. No hidden agenda. Then as now, it seems the Lord loves to astonish us with his “silly” and profligate ways.

The tragedies and trials of today’s world are, of course, not funny. No one would suggest otherwise. Yet even in the midst of great human hardship, the Lord never stops smiling upon us with the “goodness and mercy” of which our Psalm today speaks. Whether manifest in the unlikely flowering of democracy in ancient lands or in the small and unexpected miracles of heroism and

rescue found in the midst of immense natural disasters, the Lord's benevolence and love remain as strong and certain as ever.

In some circles, the Fourth Sunday in Lent – today – is known as Laetare Sunday, a Latin liturgical term that means, “Be joyful.” We might find it odd that, in the middle of our Lenten rigor, we should be encouraged to somehow rejoice. Yet the lesson is clear. For Christians, there is always time and reason to be glad. And to smile.

The Lord has not lost his sense of the miraculous in human life. He has not lost his sense of humor. Neither should we. So lighten up a little already. “Sleeper, awake!” thunders the author of Ephesians in our second reading today, no doubt jolting his hearers – and us – from mirthless complacency and indolence. “Rise from the dead,” he demands, “and Christ will shine on you.” And that, my friends, is no joke.

— *The Rev. Dr. Frank Hegedus is chaplain of [Saint Margaret's Anglican Mission](#), in Budapest, Hungary.*

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

There was a man born blind

By Dean Sam Candler of Atlanta Cathedral. Traditional narrative retelling of the Gospel.

[http://day1.org/1085-there was a man born blind](http://day1.org/1085-there-was-a-man-born-blind)

Two sermons by Bruce Prewer. One looks at the various people involved with the man born blind - his parents, those around him, and Jesus

<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocA/23LENT4.htm>

CHILDREN

[Proclaiming Faith](#), discussion, prayer, activities for primary grades, activities, 2014.

http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_faith.cfm

[Worshiping with Children](#), Lent 4A, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/year-the-fourth-sunday-in-lent-april-3.html>

["Sermon of the Week," / "Mensajes para niños,"](#) Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

[What You See](#), Anna Shirey, *Anna's Hosannas*, Children's Lesson for Lent 4A
<http://annashosannas.net/Lent-4A.php>

[Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity](#), Lent 4, at *word-sunday.com*:
A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary by Larry Broding.

<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[The Lord's My Shepherd](#)

[The King Of Love My Shepherd Is](#)

[Hail To The Lord's Anointed](#)

[Be Thou My Vision](#)

[Here I Am To Worship \(Light of the world\)](#)

[Open The Eyes Of My Heart, Lord](#)

[Shine Jesus Shine](#)

[Shine](#)