

REFLECTIONS ON THE LECTIONARY FOR LENT 4, YEAR A

FROM BISHOP SUSAN HAYNES

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Psalm 23

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

1 Samuel 16:1-13

In the well-known story from Samuel in which David, the son of Jesse, is chosen by God to be anointed king over Israel, we are reminded that appearances can be deceiving. Samuel perhaps had one idea of what a king ought to look like, but God had different ideas. God says 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." ***Where in your own life are you possibly seeing things differently from the way God sees them? What reality do you find difficult to embrace? What does God see when He looks on your heart? Is it possible that he sees a potential that you do not yet see?***

Psalm 23

This is everyone's favorite Psalm and quite timely for our present-day circumstances. It certainly seems as if our path is taking us through the valley of the shadow of death, and it is good to be reminded that we are to fear no evil and to look for the abundantly good way God provides for us. ***In what ways can you present your weary, anxiety-laden soul before God for revival? What has God spread on the table for you in the midst of your troubles?***

Ephesians 5:8-14

This text is rich in encouragement for us during these troubling times. Paul reminds us that as followers of Christ, we belong to light not darkness, to life, not death. We are called at every turn to reflect the light of Christ. The world right now is weary with the darkness of anxiety. ***What can you do to shine the light of Christ into the current darkness of the world? How can your countenance and actions reflect that you belong to the light and not to darkness?***

John 9:1-41

This long Gospel reading is the well-known story of Jesus's healing of a man blind from birth and the inability of the Pharisees to accept the reality of his healing. They are instead focused on their own perceived reality which is the upholding and breaking of Levitical

rules and laws such as healing on the Sabbath and whether or not such healing comes from God. When the formerly blind man is questioned about his new-found ability to see, he states the obvious: "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes and said, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." And when questioned again, he simply replies: "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Later when further questioned about Jesus by the Pharisees and whether or not Jesus might be a sinner, he answers: "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know that though I was blind, now I see." And even more emphatically later, "Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." Grounded firmly in his own reality, this man sees clearly the presence and healing work of God in his life. The Pharisees, unfortunately, are not able to embrace that reality. ***Where is your focus on reality? Do you SEE what God is doing in your life, or are you distracted by ponderous requirements that you think God wants you to keep? What has God done for you that you can state for the world as directly as the blind man has?***

Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Lent:

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*