

Notes for Next Sunday

Fourth Sunday in Lent

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 42:14-21). The Lord saw the awful condition of mankind for over 3000 years. He sent messengers to warn his people and even foretell the coming of Christ. These were ignored. God restrained himself until the proper time. When time of the delivery comes, a woman can cry out in desperation but cannot delay the birth of her child. Though He restrained Himself for a long time, nothing can prevent the Lord from keeping His promise to open the way of forgiveness for fallen humankind.

Epistle (Ephesians 5:8-14). In this passage from Ephesians Paul draws on the subject of light and darkness to urge his listeners to be God-fearing people. He has already made them in Christ: "children of light" (5:8). Although light is not a predominant theme in Ephesians, Christ's election of people into his church by his grace through faith certainly is. Starting with Ephesians 1:4 Paul speaks eloquently of the mysterious working of God through Christ in setting him over "all rule and authority" (1:21), calling people out of sin and slavery into a relationship with himself.

Gospel (John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39). This is a blind man that Jesus spots as He is passing by as He is traveling with His disciples. The disciples reflect the beliefs of their day that "if you have a malady of some nature, then you must have committed as sort sin." After Jesus disabuses their theory He applies mud to the eyes and gives instructions on where to wash so his sight will be restored. Now the Pharisees get involved because it is the Sabbath. There the discussion gets very confusing and they again ask the man how he was healed. When he doesn't disavow Jesus they kick him out of the Temple. At this point Jesus reenters the picture. Jesus brings the man to faith and rebukes the Pharisees for their spiritual blindness.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 42:14-21

¹⁴ "For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant. ¹⁵ I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools. ¹⁶ I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them. ¹⁷ But those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame. ¹⁸ "Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! ¹⁹ Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the servant of the LORD? ²⁰ You have seen many things, but have paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing." ²¹ It pleased the LORD for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious.

42:15 rivers into islands. Not an act of destruction. The Lord is leading the blind, so He removes all obstacles for such people. (TLSB)

42:17 those who trust in idols. Despite God's care and power, idolatry will continue among those who reject the Lord and His Servant. (TLSB)

42:21 *law great and glorious*. Israel had no excuse for its failure to perform its assigned service; it knew God's will (Lk 12:47). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

5:8 live as children of light. When Paul says, “(They) were once darkness,” he is taking it a step farther. Not only were they misled and under the influence of wicked paganism, they themselves were a bad influence. They were the darkness that misled others to practice and even enjoy gross immorality and wickedness. (PBC)

5:9 fruit of the light. A common NT image for good works and deeds that flow naturally from one planted in Christ (John 15:1-8; Col. 1:10). (TLSB)

5:11 expose. Light, by nature, exposes what is in darkness, and the contrast shows sin for what it really is. (CSB)

GOSPEL – John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39

As he went 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?” ³“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. ⁴As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ⁷“Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

9:3 this happened so... All imperfections result from sin but there is not a one-to-one correlation. Jesus had come to save this man and not punish him so this was be that opportunity.

9:6 spit on the ground and made mud. Jesus violated the rabbinic rules concerning the Sabbath. The rabbis listed kneading dough among 39 forms of work forbidden on the Sabbath, a law though also to cover the mixing of earth and saliva. (TLSB)

9:6 put on the eyes. In ancient times, saliva was thought to have curative powers (e.g., how animals clean themselves). (TLSB)

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.” ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?” So they were divided. ¹⁷Finally they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

9:16 *Some ... others.* Two schools of thought divided the Pharisees. Some questioned Jesus' authority by focusing on His alleged violation of Sabbath law. Others argued that only one sent from God could perform such a miracle (cf Ac 5:38–39). (TLSB)

³⁴ To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out. ³⁵ Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷ Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” ³⁸ Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

9:34 *threw him out.* May mean “expelled him from their assembly” or, more probably, “excommunicated him.” (CSB)

9:38 *Lord ... he worshiped him.* The man's faith grew from acknowledging Jesus as a prophet (v. 17) to confessing Him as being “from God” (v. 33) to honoring Him as Lord. This does not mean the man realized Jesus was God. Consider the faith of the disciples, which was genuine though they lacked full understanding of who Jesus was; cf. Mt. 8:23-27.) (TLSB)

9:39 *For judgment.* Jesus did not come to condemn the world but to save it (3:16–17). His coming is a judgment, however, because those who reject Him bring everlasting condemnation upon themselves. (TLSB)