

Worship Plan for Sunday, March 22, 2020
Service of Word and Prayer

Introduction to the day...

Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. "I was blind, now I see," declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God's beloved children. 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. *(2 Corinthians 13:13)*

C **And also with you.**

P The word is near you,

C **on your lips and in your heart.**

P If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord,

C **and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

P Faith comes from what is heard,

C **and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.** *(Romans 10)*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

P Let us pray...God of all mercy, by your power to heal and to forgive, graciously cleanse us from all sin and make us strong; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen**

FIRST LESSON: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

R A reading from 1 Samuel.

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.

R The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 23

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

C **The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.**

R You restore my soul, O LORD, and guide me along right pathways for your name’s sake.

C **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.**

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

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

SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 5:8-14

R A reading from Ephesians.

Because we now live in the divine light which 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.”

R The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

C **Word of life, Jesus Christ, all glory to you! Word of life, Jesus Christ, all praise to you! Our hearts burn within us while you open to us the Scriptures. Word of life, Jesus Christ, all glory to you! Word of life, Jesus Christ, all praise to you!**

GOSPEL: John 9:1-41

P **Glory to you, O Lord.**

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.”

P The Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise to you, O Christ.**

CHILDREN’S SERMON

SERMON

RESPONSE TO THE WORD: CREED AND CONFESSION

P In Christ, you have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

C **We believe in him and are marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.**

(Ephesians 1:13-14)

P Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

C I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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

P Build yourselves up on your most holy faith;

C pray in the Holy Spirit. (*Jude 20*)

P Keep yourselves in the love of God;

C look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Jude 21*)

P If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:

C Everything old has passed away; behold, everything has become new! (*2 Corinthians 5:17*)

P God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, let us be reconciled to God and to one another.

Silence for reflection and self examination.

P Gracious God,

C have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

P Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.

C Amen

PEACE

P Sisters and brothers, rejoice. Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace. (*2 Corinthians 13:11*) The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C And also with you.

P Let us pray...Gracious God,

C in the abundance of your steadfast love, you call us from death to life, from silence to speech, from idleness to action. With these gifts we offer ourselves to you, and with the Church through all the ages we give thanks for your saving love in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

THE PRAYERS

P Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

God of insight, open the hearts of the church and the world to all who testify to your deeds of power. Raise up voices in your church that are often silenced or overlooked due to age, gender, race, or economic status. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

P God of insight, empower us to care for the land and all living things that dwell in it and beneath it. Provide rich soil for crops to grow. Bring rain to lands suffering drought. Protect hills and shorelines from damage caused by erosion. Be with those who are on the front lines of this pandemic, doctors, nurses, lab technicians, certified nursing attendants, and all care givers... Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

P God of insight, bring peace to all people and nations. Anoint leaders who seek goodness, righteousness, and truth on behalf of all. Frustrate the efforts of those who would seek to cause violence or terror. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

P God of insight, you care for our needs even before we ask. Come quickly to all who seek prayer this day. Watch over grocery store workers, truck drivers, those who are lonely, workers who have been laid off from their job, our first responders, those who are attempting to return home, and those who are still far away. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

P God of insight, help this assembly lift up the unique gifts of each person who gathers with us today, no matter their physical capacity, cognitive ability, or sensory need. Help us to be creative and brave in making our ministries accessible to all. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

P God of insight, you call out to those who are asleep and awaken them to new life with you. We give thanks for your saints Jim Dines, and Elaine Jorgenson. Join us together with them as your children in this world and the next. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

P According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

P Let us pray with confidence in the words our Savior gave us:

C 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.

or

C Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

P May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ fill you with every spiritual blessing.

C Amen

P May the God of faithfulness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus.

C Amen

P May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen

DISMISSAL

P Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

March 22, 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Eyes Opened

Toward the end of today's lengthy gospel reading, religious leaders summon, for a second time, the man who was blind from birth and whose sight Jesus restored one Sabbath day. Confounded by Jesus' disregard for the Sabbath, they judge him a sinner and ask how a sinner could have worked such healing. They cry to the newly sighted man, "'Give glory to God! We *know* that this man is a sinner.' He answered, '*I do not know* whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see'" (John 9:24-25; emphasis added).

It is such a radically simple answer. But this clear testimony does not align with the preconceived judgment of the religious leaders, who won't rejoice that the man's eyes have been opened. Instead, the blame game initiated by Jesus' disciples rages on in altered form. While the disciples wondered if it was the man's or his family's *fault* that he was blind to begin with, the religious leaders focused on a way to discredit the one who had restored his sight. Neither the disciples nor the religious leaders seem empathetic about the man's blindness, nor joyful about the new possibilities for his life and participation in community now that he can see.

As we listen to the narrative unfold, perhaps we recognize some of the voices blaming, accusing, or (as with the man's parents) seeking to withdraw from the controversy. The story stands in John's gospel as another important sign, identifying Jesus as "light of the world" (John 9:5). But it also serves to remind us of ways we are blinded by our judgments and critiques of others and of ourselves. To what and whom are our eyes closed? What mixture of mud and washing might open us to see differently and, in so doing, restore us in and to community?