

Scripture Readings and Sermon

March 22, 2020 by Rev. Mark Brechin

Commentary on 1 Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13 (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

In 1 Samuel 15, there is a fairly heated argument between Samuel and Saul regarding the attack on the Amaleks. By the end of this argument, the Lord has rejected Saul for his lack of obedience and Samuel has Agag, the king of the Amaleks, executed. The passages left out of the reading today reflect this tension. In verse 2, Samuel is afraid that Saul will kill him if Saul finds out that Samuel is looking for another king. In verse 4, the elders of Bethlehem tremble at Samuel's arrival not only because Samuel is currently out of favor with Saul but also because of Agag. David's anointing, therefore, is done in secret. It will be years before David defeats Goliath, becomes the court musician, and the commander of the armies of Israel. The anointing of David is set in contrast to the selection of Saul in Chapter 9. It was said of Saul that "not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; he stood head and shoulders above everyone else." And when Samuel anointed Saul before the people in Chapter 10, he said, "Do you see the one whom the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people." Yet, for all of his good looks, Saul had a low self esteem. David in contrast is the littlest in his family and not the most handsome. The strong outward appearance of Saul is replaced by the strong inner life of David - his heart.

Commentary on Ephesians 5:8-14 (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

Paul continues his discourse in Ephesians on the two ways of life and the new person and old person this time contrasting light and dark. Living in the dark as Gentiles, they were unaware of both God's glory and God's law which reveals sin and the need for salvation. In Jesus, however, they have received both the conviction of sin and the forgiveness by grace. This is what Paul means by stating "you are light". We are not the light but since we are in Christ then we are in the light. And since that light comes through the Holy Spirit dwelling in our lives, to the world we are both light and children of the light. This is the light of the new person in Christ and the way that leads to life. Since the light reveals sin, Paul argues that they should "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness". Unfruitful because they are not of God and dark because they are done in ignorance of God's will.

Commentary on John 9:13-41 (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

In the previous chapter, after saving the woman from being stoned for adultery, Jesus proclaims that he is "the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (8:12) By the end of the chapter 8, the Pharisees ("the Jews") the disagreement between Jesus and "the Jews" had come to a point where they wanted to stone him (8:59). {Note that everyone in the story would today be called Jewish. John uses the term "Jew" to refer to the religious leaders.} It is after this conflict that John tells the story of the blind man as almost an illustration of what Jesus meant when he said that he was "the light of the world". There is not enough space to do a full going deeper but there are a few points of interest which warrant attention. The first is that it was not the man's faith that brought healing but rather a theological discussion between Jesus and his disciples about the relationship between sin and physical illness (blind). Jesus reveals who he is (I AM - 8:58) by reenacting the creation of man by mixing mud and saliva (Genesis 2:7). The following discussion which ignores the miracle and focuses on the working on the Sabbath, the validity of the man's blindness, and the authority of Jesus to heal is all meant to point toward spiritual blindness. Jesus brought light not only to the man's eyes but to his mind as revealed in his responses to the Jewish leaders question.

Sermon "Blind Fear" (*[Sermon Video](#)*)

The story of the healing of the blind man in John has less to do with physical sight and more to do with spiritual sight. No one questions if the man had actually been blind or if he could really see but rather they questioned the way in which he was healed. The Pharisees were blinded by their own legalism. The synagogue leaders (Jews) were blinded by their dislike of Jesus. Their spiritual blindness kept them from praising God for the miracle. The one who was a beggar and blind, however, spoke with spiritual insight and wisdom. The spirit of God had opened not only the man's eyes but his heart to the truth of Jesus.

This spiritual vision is what God saw in David. While Samuel judged Jesse's sons based on outward physical appearance, God looked at David's heart. When David was anointed, God's spirit entered David and would shine through him for the rest of his life. When others were terrified the spirit of courage and faith helped David face Goliath. Saul's restless soul could only be calmed when the spirit of peace flowed through David's music. And later when David strayed from God's path, that same spirit drove David to repentance. As Christians, we have been anointed with that same Spirit through Jesus Christ. This is what Paul was telling the Ephesians. The light of Christ through the Holy Spirit is in you. Wake up and shine your light.

During these uncertain times, we need to shine the light of faith in our communities. There is a very real threat that our hospital system may be overwhelmed if the outbreak is not properly contained. Therefore, it is prudent to limit unnecessary interactions especially if you are feeling sick or if you are more likely to become sick. We need to be responsible citizens and do what we can to insure the health of our neighbors.

That said, there is no need to let fear blind us into rash actions. As Paul said, let us "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness". When we hear news like there may be power brown outs, let us not be ruled by fear. Make reasonable preparations and give the unknown over to God. Worrying will not solve anything and in fact will lower your immune system. There is a song I learned when I visited Taizé, "Lord Jesus Christ your light shines within us, let not my doubt or my darkness speak to me. Lord Jesus Christ your light shines within us, let my heart always welcome your love." May Christ's light shine in the dark days we find ourselves in.