

## Commentary on the Readings for March 19, 2023

### The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Have you ever had the experience of hearing or reading something that you know you have read or heard many times before but didn't really understand the meaning? Then, all of a sudden, the "light comes on" and you understand in a way that you didn't before. We have some of that in the readings for today. Don't just read or hear the words, but listen with your heart to the deeper meaning of the following passages. It might take a little more time to absorb the full meaning, but it is worth the effort.

In the **First Reading**, from the ***First Book of Samuel (16:1-13)***, Samuel, a special servant of the God of Israel, is sent on a mission of great importance, to anoint a new king to replace Saul. He looks at the many sons of Jesse to whom God sends him and thinks, to himself, that each would be a fitting replacement; but God has different plans and rejects them all except the last, the youngest. Now Samuel sees what God had in mind, a young man with the confidence and character needed to fill a large role in God's **Plan of Salvation**.

The **Responsorial Psalm, (23:1-6)**, is the famous "***The Lord is My Shepherd***" prayer. Even though you might have heard this many times, pause and listen to the words. God is truly a divine shepherd who wishes to take care of each of us as thoroughly as a shepherd takes care of his sheep. Sheep do not have good eyesight and require careful watching for many reasons. God is willing to watch over us, if we let Him and follow His lead.

In the **Second Reading**, from ***St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (5:8-14)***, Paul uses the symbols of "light" and "darkness" to indicate **awareness** and **ignorance**, or even worse,. If written in today's language, Paul's letter would probably say, "If you are truly Christ's disciple then live according to His teachings. Don't ignore the life and teachings of Jesus Christ; **a refusal to listen** they are our keys to heaven."

The **Gospel Reading** is from the ***Gospel of John (9:1-41)***. Here we have an extensive teaching by Jesus referring to Himself as the ***Light of the World***. We have a blind man who represents all of Judaism from antiquity to the present, who longs to see the Messiah, but is unable because he is looking in the wrong direction, or he is looking for something or someone to fulfill a preconceived need. In this story, the Pharisees, who knew better but who refused to listen, were both deaf and blind to what Jesus was saying and doing. Their minds were not open and their faith was so locked in the earthly teachings of Moses that they failed to see God standing before them in the person of Jesus Christ.

The old proverb applies here: "***There is no one as blind as he who refuses to see!***" During this Lenten Season ask God to help you open your mind and heart to what He is asking of you and what He wants to do through you. Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

**MFB**