

# Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year A

## Fourth Sunday of Lent

### **First reading:**

(1 Samuel 16.1, 6-7, 10-13)

*David Anointed King*

In the sketch of the preparation for the coming of Christ which the Church lays before us during Lent, the fourth Sunday brings us to the story of David, with whom the promises of a messianic king originate.

As founder of the messianic kingly dynasty, David is the figure of the reality that will be fulfilled by Jesus. Here we have one of the three biblical versions of the discovery of the future king (the others being the story of the young musician at Saul's court and the story of the young warrior slaying the giant Goliath). Here the lesson is that God does not choose as human beings do, although David is obviously an attractive young lad. He would turn out to be a leader of charisma, who could twist anyone round his little finger. God also chose Cain's younger brother Abel, and the youngest of Jacob's 12 sons, Joseph.

We constantly have difficulty in accepting that our achievements contribute nothing to God and do not earn his favour. David, the adulterer and murderer, learnt the hard way that we can rely only on God's merciful forgiveness.

### **Question:**

*Why is David the model of the messianic king?*

### **Second reading:**

(Ephesians 5.8-14)

*Rise from the Dead and Christ will shine on you*

This reading is obviously chosen to prepare for the gospel reading, in which Jesus brings sight to the blind man.

Light is one of the archetypal symbols of hope and encouragement. Without light we are crippled until, as the psalmist says, with the dawn man goes forth to his work and activities. In the Old Testament, God is light who lives 'in inaccessible light'.

In the New Testament, this attribute of God is transferred to Jesus, for Jesus proclaims that he is the light of the world. In the final book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, victorious from the conquest over evil, God and the 'Lamb once slain' together constitute the light of the new city of God, so that neither sun nor moon is required.

The reading ends with a positive little couplet, possibly an early Christian hymn adopted into the reading, about Christ as the light who by his Resurrection bursts through the deepest darkness of all, the darkness of death.

Even in the darkness of Lent, preoccupied with the coming Passion of the Lord, we look forward to his liberation and ours in the glory of the Resurrection at Easter.

### **Question:**

*Is Jesus truly the light of the world for me?*

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## **Gospel:**

*(John 9.1-41)*

### *The Cure of the Man born Blind*

The second of the three great Johannine readings about water, light and life featured in the baptisms of Easter gives us the splendid account of Jesus bringing light to the blind man in the Temple. It is full of Johannine contrasts and irony.

The 'Jews' or the Pharisees think they have the light and knowledge, but the more they abuse the man born blind, the clearer their own darkness and ignorance become. The more they try to thrust him away from Jesus, the more they push him into seeking refuge in him.

Much of the colouring of the scene comes from the controversies towards the end of the first century, when the Pharisees were the only branch of Judaism to survive after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

The New Testament shows that there was bitter opposition between those Jews who accepted the divine claims for Jesus, and those who rejected them. This is especially clear in the fear of the blind man's parents that they would be excluded from the synagogue if they accepted that Jesus' grant of sight was a sign of his divine mission. The doughty and pugnacious man born blind has no such hesitation!

## **Question:**

*Where did these opponents of Jesus go wrong?*

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