



TACOMA, WASHINGTON

SUNDAY WORSHIP
THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT
MARCH 22, 2020

WORSHIP IN THE HOUSEHOLD

The earliest Christian household for which we have archeological evidence was located in the Syrian city of Dura-Europus. It is dated to the early 200s. We know that Syrian Christians worshipped in their homes, as did all Christians throughout and beyond the Roman Empire for many centuries. One image from the Dura-Europus house is that of a shepherd with a lamb over his shoulders and a flock of



sheep to his side. The early Christian historian Graydon Snyder interpreted the shepherd image in this way: in a culture marked by chaos, chronic sickness, and violence, the shepherd served as an image of *the Christian community* and its hospitality, its commitment to healthcare and healing, and its desire to promote forgiveness and reconciliation. What interests us here is that the household was the place in which generosity to strangers, care for the sick, and

acts of forgiveness were first practiced in the presence of children who would recognize in these practices something different than what their culture valued.

Preparation

Is there an image of Christ in your home that can focus your prayer this day? Place it on the table where you will pray. And by all means, if you can light a candle for prayer, please do: the gospel reading is filled with light. Keep this in mind: though most of us have been raised in American individualism (*I, me, and mine*), Christian worship is always voiced in the plural: *we, us, and ours*. It's not about me. It's about us wherever we find ourselves: by ourselves, with a spouse, or in a family.

Centering

Make the sign of the cross and say:

Blessed be the God of our salvation
Who bears our burdens and forgives our sins.

Pray this canticle aloud with a brief pause at each asterisk:

Glorify the Lord, all you works of the Lord, *
sing praise and give honor forever.

In the high vault of heaven, glorify the Lord, *
sing praise and give honor forever.

Glorify the Lord, you angels and all powers of the Lord, *
O heavens and all waters above the heavens.

Sun and moon and stars of the sky, glorify the Lord, *
Sing praise and give honor forever.

Glorify the Lord, every shower of rain and fall of dew, *
all winds and fire and heat.

Winter and summer, glorify the Lord, *
sing praise and give honor forever.

Glorify the Lord, O chill and cold, *
drops of dew and flakes of snow.

Frost and cold, ice and sleet, glorify the Lord, *
sing praise and give honor forever.

Glorify the Lord, O nights and days, *
O shining light and enfolding dark.

Storm clouds and thunderbolts, glorify the Lord, *
Sing praise and give honor forever.

(Canticle 12, Song of the Three Youths, 35)

After a time of silence, pray this prayer:

God of the living,
through Holy Baptism
we pass from the shadow of death
to the light of the resurrection.
Remain with us and give us hope
that, rejoicing in the gift of the Spirit
who gives life to our mortal flesh,
we may be clothed with the garment of immortality,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Word of God for the Fourth Sunday in Lent

The reading of the Gospel is the primary reading of the day and should always be read. It follows after a reading from the Hebrew Scriptures, a Psalm, and a reading from the early church. The first three scripture texts can be found here:

http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearA_RCL/Lent/ALent4_RCL.html#gsp1

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Psalm 23 *If you have time, listen to these two very different musical interpretations of this much-loved psalm:*

The Choir of King's College Cambridge:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WeS4y8UOS7c>

The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbgxBvLFErg>

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41 *Read this gospel text aloud:*

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

The 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?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He 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." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."



They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then 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." Some 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.

So 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."

The Judeans 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 and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but 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." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Judeans had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

So 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." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He 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?"

Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. Jesus 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." Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

A meditation on the gospel reading by Fr. Malcolm Guite

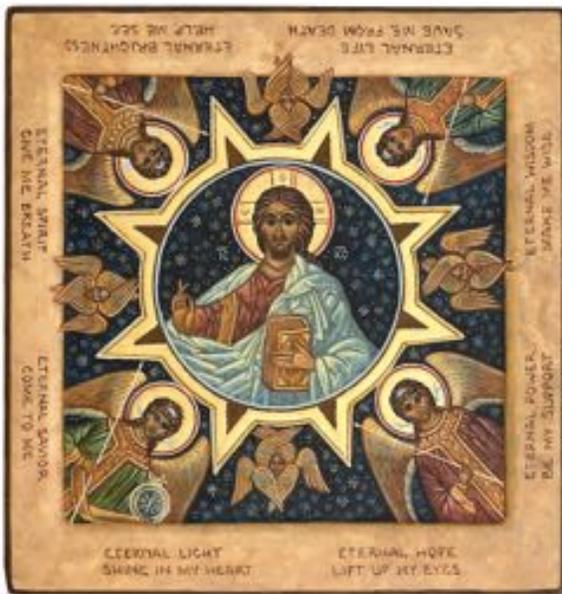
The transcendent light that gives us consciousness, which must exist as light in our souls as well as beyond them, is one and the same with the One who said, "I am the light of the world." It is not an abstract diffuse transcendent consciousness, but a personal and loving Savior ... it is a personal encounter with Jesus, the God who became human for us. The 17th century Anglican poet John Davies moves seamlessly from one to the other in a little-known passage that is one of the great moments in English poetry:

*O Light which [makes] the light, which makes the day!
Which [sees] the eye without, and mind within;
Lighten my spirit with one clear heavenly ray,
Which now to view itself doth first begin.*

*But Thou which [did] of man's soul of nothing make,
And when to nothing it was fallen again,
To make it new the form of man didst take,
And God with God became a Man with men [sic].*

Davies appeals to the light of Christ as equally available to all people, breaking down the false barriers of class and wealth, and the divisions between ordained and lay so prevalent in the church in both his age and ours. *I wonder, then: If God can make God's presence available equally to all, if God can do that with the light of day, and with the inner light of his presence, why can't we manage it in our common and political life?*

Prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need



These intercessions may be used, adding others in each household:

For the peace from above, for the loving-kindness of God, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the world, for the welfare of the Holy Church of God, and for the unity of all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

For our Bishop, and for all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

For our President, for the leaders of the nations, and for all in authority, let us pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

For this city and for every city and community, and for those who live in them,
let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the good earth, which God has given us, and for the wisdom and will to
conserve it, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the aged and infirm, for the widowed and orphans, and for the sick and the
suffering, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the poor and the oppressed, for the unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners
and captives, and for all who remember and care for them,
let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who have (+) died in the hope of the resurrection, and for all the departed,
let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

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.

Deliver us, O God, from every evil,

And grant us peace in our day.

In your mercy keep us free from sin

And protect us from all anxiety

As we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Blessing

Make the sign of the cross as you say:

The (+) Sacred Three be over thee and me: the blessing of the holy Trinity.

Amen.

May our light so shine before others that they may see our good works

And give thanks to God. Amen.

GIVING THANKS AT TABLE

The practice of giving thanks to God over food and drink at table – what some call “saying grace” – marked the practice of Jesus, his followers, and subsequent generations of Christians. You are welcome to use this thanksgiving whenever you are at table for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

We give thanks to you, O God,
For these gifts of the earth and human labor,
Signs of your gracious care for all creation.

Through your Word you have made them grow
And have commanded the earth to bear a plentiful harvest
For the joy and nourishment of humankind and all manner of creatures.

For this we praise you, O God,
And for the blessings you give us
When you adorn the whole creation
With the gifts of field, vine, sea, and orchard
Through your Child, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Through him we give you thanks,
O Merciful, O Loving God, now and forever. Amen.

Notes

Opening acclamation and Canticle: *Enriching Our Worship 1*, New York: Church Publishing, 1998

Opening Prayer: *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, Nashville: Consultation on Common Texts, 2002; administered by Augsburg Fortress Publishers

Biblical readings from *The New Revised Common Lectionary* adapted for Episcopal Use, 2006

Gospel reading: *New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible*, Washington, DC: The National Council of Churches, 1989

Meditation: adapted from Malcolm Guite, *The Word in the Wilderness: A Poem a Day for Lent and Easter*, Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014

Prayers and Lord's Prayer: *The Book of Common Prayer* 1979

Concluding Prayer: *The Roman Missal*, Washington, DC: International Committee on English in the Liturgy, 1973.

Blessing: Samuel Torvend; Matthew 5:16

Thanksgiving at Table: adapted from Hippolytus of Rome, “The Apostolic Tradition,” in Lucien Deiss, *Springtime of the Liturgy: Liturgical Texts of the First Four Centuries*, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1979

Image 1: The Shepherd, Dura Europus Baptismal Font

Image 2: Brian Jenkel, “Christ healing a blind man,” date not known

Image 3: Betsy Porter, “Christ Pantocrator (Ruler of All, Sustainer of All), Eternal Light,” 2003