

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

People look at appearances, but the Lord looks at the heart.

First Reading

Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit. *Psalm*

You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord.

Second Reading

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
Whoever follows me will have the light of life. *Gospel Acclamation*

Father of peace, we are joyful in your Word,
your Son Jesus Christ, who reconciles us to you.
Let us hasten toward Easter with the eagerness of faith and love.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:

1 Samuel 16: 1.6–7, 10–13; Psalm 22 (23); Ephesians 5: 8–14; John 9: 1–41

William Holman Hunt, detail from 'The Light of the World'
(Manchester version, 1851–6). Image in the public domain.



'I am the
light of the
world'

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Fourth Sunday in Lent
Year A, 19th March 2023

'Lord, I believe!'

Before we enter the darker days of Holy Week, we celebrate *Laetare* ('Rejoice!') Sunday. Today we are reminded of the joy of the presence of Jesus, the light of our world, and of the love of God shining through our lives.

Both the **First Reading** and the Psalm speak of the shepherd caring for the flock. Despite David's youth and outward appearance, the Lord sees the strength of his heart, which will enable him to lead God's people.

The **Psalm** speaks of the certainty that I can rely on the Lord as *my* shepherd, keeping me safe from harm whatever happens in my life.

In the **Second Reading**, St Paul reminds the Ephesians (and us) that God's light in us shines out for others when we live in *goodness and right living and truth*.

In the **Gospel**, the blind man's sight is restored and he comes into the light. Not only is he physically able to see for the first time, but he also recognises Jesus as the Son of Man. In contrast, those around him remain in the darkness of un-belief, trapped by their unwillingness to see Jesus as he really is.

This week, we pray for those who have yet to allow the light of Christ into their lives. We pray that we will carry Christ's light to others as we walk beside them, sharing their hardships and sorrows.



Opening Prayer

O God, who through your Word
reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way,
grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith
the Christian people may hasten toward
the solemn celebrations to come.

Psalm 22 (23)

R:/ The Lord is my shepherd: there is nothing I shall want.

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose.

Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name.

If I should walk in the valley of darkness no evil would I fear.

You are there with your crook and your staff;

with these you give me comfort.

You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes.

My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me

all the days of my life.

In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever.

As I come to my time of prayer today, I might look back over my Lenten journey thus far. Has it been a time of light? Or have I struggled to see through the darkness of the world around me? If I can, I set aside any worries I am carrying and enter into the Lord's presence.

Although I may have prayed or sung this Psalm many times in my life, I take the time to read it again, slowly and mindfully. Perhaps a word, or a phrase, or a verse particularly stands out?

I may set the text aside now, and enter into the fresh and green pastures of my imagination. Perhaps I take off my shoes and feel the soft grass underfoot, noticing every little sensation as I make my way down to the waters of a stream flowing close by. I see Jesus sitting by the stream. He knows, he understands how things are for me. So without the need for words, I settle myself beside him.

I allow the peace and tranquillity of this place to refresh me, and revive my drooping spirit.

As I prepare to leave, I take some time to tell the Lord what is in my heart. I ask him for whatever I need at this moment.

I end my prayer thanking the Lord for all the goodness and kindness in my life.

Gospel John 9: 1–41 (part)

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. He spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (a name that means 'sent'). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored. His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'Yes, it is the same one.' Others said, 'No, he only looks like him.' The man himself said, 'I am the man.' They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been a sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the sabbath.' Others said, 'How could a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' 'He is a prophet,' replied the man. 'Are you trying to teach us,' they replied, 'and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!' And they drove him away. Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir,' the man replied, 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You are looking at him; he is speaking to you.' The man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and worshipped him.

Settling in my place of prayer, I may like to read the text a couple of times and then replay the scene in my imagination. Witnessing what happens, I notice the reactions of the man as his sight is restored, and of those who question and criticise, remaining in the darkness of their disbelief. What do I see? What is my response?

I watch the man's second encounter with Jesus. What is it like for him as he now sees Jesus and believes? And how does it feel for me to come face to face with Jesus? What have I to say about my belief in him?

As Jesus looks at me, is there something I want to ask of him – or something he wants to say to me? Perhaps I speak to him about areas of my life that remain in the darkness?

I stay here with Jesus as long as I need.

I end by asking that he draws me ever closer into the light of his love.