



15<sup>th</sup> March 2026

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent



## *Let us trust in God alone*

Greetings my brothers and sisters in Christ, a great joy to be here, as we come together on our 4<sup>th</sup> week of our Lenten journey and also celebrating Mothering Sunday that originated in 16th-century England, as a Christian tradition, for visiting one's "mother church"—the main cathedral or parish church where one was baptized. Held on the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday), it allowed servants a day off to return home and visit their family and home church.

I pray, that today's message will continue to lift all our spirits, as we journey together, and encourage us, as we live out our lives as Christians, servants of Christ our Lord, committed to lives of service, in His Kingdom!

Let us pray.

*Heavenly Father, as we gather together as living stones, part of your Church, we ask the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts, kindling in them the fire of your love.*

*Almighty God, speak to us through your Holy Spirit, and as we walk in the light of your Spirit may we grow in wisdom, always rejoicing in the comfort He brings, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Well it's a great set of Bible readings that we have today, that are all interconnected.

Have we ever had times, when we are called to try and find the difficult balance between faithfulness to God's known work in the past, and prophetic discernment in God's new work now! I know I have!!!

When faced with a completely new challenge, the hardest thing of all, for us, is to try to discern if it is from God or not. And then, when the challenge is past, and the new insights it bought, are absorbed and become part of the 'tradition', it is hard to imagine the time when we were unsure. We can look back and see this new thing is absolutely in line with the character of the loving God we worship, as displayed in all His past interactions with us!

So how could we possibly have doubted it.?

But then, the next new thing comes over the horizon, and we are left floundering again!

Our first reading today, demonstrates this, the story of Samuel and Saul. It's easy for us to sympathize with Samuel. We read that, God had used Samuel to anoint Saul and support him in battle. To be committed to him, as God's way for his people. And so, Samuel does what God asks.

But when God then tells him to abandon Saul and anoint another in his place, Samuel cannot so quickly change his emotions. He grieves for Saul. And when, with heavy heart, he sets out to do God's bidding, he is still, however unconsciously, looking for a direct replacement for Saul, another big, strong, handsome warrior who will command the respect of his people.

Only Samuel's prophetic gift from God enables him obediently to know David when at last he meets him. But if we maybe sympathize with Samuel, can we then also sympathize with the "Jews" in today's Gospel reading?

They – like most of us – don't have the advantage of direct prophetic communication with God, but they do have a profound, lifelong knowledge of God through the Scriptures, the God of Moses. This God called his people to be holy, and to show his own character through obedience. So, observance of the Sabbath is not a detachable element, but a part of all they know about how to serve God.

Now, in looking back in retrospect, it may seem clear to us that they had allowed the rules to take the place of genuine seeking of God. They had assumed that it is enough to follow the law of Moses, and that no deeper confrontation with God is required. However, isn't it easier to be wise after the event, and not easy to apply that wisdom to ourselves.

What clues of wisdom did the 'Jews' have, that in Jesus, God was making new, and personal claims on their lives! They are faced with a man, who they believe, was blind as a punishment for his sinfulness, and who had been healed on the sabbath!

Is the healing itself enough of a sign of God's presence to counteract their fixed belief in what God does and does not want for his people?

Over and over again, they question the man who was blind and over and over again, he doggedly, tells his tale, though his exasperation increases throughout the story. This man, at least, is in no doubt about what has happened and how he feels about it.

Then, at last, the 'Jews' try to direct the man's joy into more suitable channels. They have to accept that the man was indeed blind, and now he can see, and that Jesus is somehow involved in this, but they try to make the man leave out Jesus and go straight to God and give thanks!

But the man is not having it! To him it is clear that the two are connected. That the power that healed him is indeed the power of God, but the saliva and the hands that made the mud are Jesus'.

'*What's the problem?*' he demands! The problem is not that the 'Jews' cannot connect God's new work in Jesus with his previous work, but that they really don't want to.

There is something about Jesus that they just long to escape from.

They, Jesus says grimly, are the blind ones, and their blindness, unlike the man's, is caused by sin, because it is their deliberate chose!

The epistle to the Ephesians is clear that '*trying to find out what is pleasing to the Lord*', is the daily task of all Christians. Everything must be laid out in the light of God, nothing can be taken for granted or left unexamined by that light!

Even what we think we know about God must be bought constantly under that piercing scrutiny, because there is no other source of light, and no other possibility of recognizing the new acts of our unchanging God!

Lent is a time for us to examine where we have placed our hopes!

Is it in our own confident knowledge and self-trust!, where God hardly has a place, or in a ready admission of our need for the good gifts alone that God gives us! **Amen**