

**Fourth Sunday in Lent**  
**Cycle A RCL**  
**Revised**

**1 Samuel 16:1-13**

The final author of 1 Samuel, the Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr), combined both an early source favorable to the monarchy and a late source unfavorable to it. Dtr held the view that the monarchy was indeed God's will for Israel but that most of the kings were unworthy of their great calling. Even Saul and David engaged in activities that caused God to withdraw his favor from them. Dtr in our passage follows his late source in seeing God's hand in the removal of kingly authority from Saul and its transmission to David. Later, in 2 Samuel 11-12, David will lose the Lord's approbation as a result of his murder of Uriah the Hittite. This great wrong instilled a fatal flaw into the rule of the house of David that, in Dtr's mind, would ultimately result in the loss of the kingdom to the Babylonians.

**Psalm 23**

*Trust psalms*, like the *laments*, come in two kinds, individual (Psalms 11, 16, 23, 62, 131) or communal (Psalms 125, 129). Unlike the laments, however, the psalms of trust do not ask for deliverance but like the hymns, celebrate God's goodness and faithfulness. We are unsure of their liturgical function.

**Ephesians 5:8-14**

The unknown imitator of Paul who composed Ephesians did so principally by expanding upon Colossians. Compare the ethical injunctions here with those of Colossians 3. By the middle of the first century, Christianity was well enough established in the pagan world to raise the question as to how Christians would interact with their pagan neighbors. Would they act just like their neighbors except for their worship? Would they distinguish themselves by their moral superiority? The author follows Paul's general practice of holding his formerly pagan readers to the highest standards of contemporary morality without laying new, legalistic burdens upon them.

**John 9:1-41**

The reference to the fear of blind man's parents that they would be put out of the synagogue if they confessed Jesus as Messiah reflects a time of composition after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Despite this late date, the author of the Fourth Gospel reveals accurate knowledge of Jerusalem before the destruction in 70 as is shown by mention of the Pool of Siloam, the end of Hezekiah's Tunnel, constructed at the end of the 8th century BCE to bring the waters of the Gihon Spring into the city. The "signs" in John 1-11 all show the power of God in Jesus. This constitutes the reason for Jesus' answer to his students' question in 9:2 about whose sin caused the man's blindness.

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