

Fourth Sunday in Lent      March 26, 2017

**LUTHERAN**

## **LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY**

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the  
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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March 23, 2017 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44130

*(Presented as a part of the bible study/worship weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church  
setting, a newly formed assisted living site and used by Lutherans in Africa.*

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<http://www.findingsolace.org/support/scripture/healing-miracles-page/>

### **Hymn of the Day**

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 972 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 319?**

*“I trust, O Christ, in you alone”*

LSB 972 is not found in the pew edition. Several additional hymns, 967 – 986, are printed in the Hymn Accompaniment Edition. Although the tune, “Allein zu der”, is the same for the TLH hymn, the verses vary greatly. An alternative Hymn of the Day is “God loved the world so that he gave”; LSB 571, TLH 245.

“(Gilbert) Doan (translator) was educated at Harvard University (BA 1942); Lutheran Theological Seminary (BD 1955); the University of Pennsylvania (MA 1962, though he returned it to the school to protest their policies); and Wagner College (DD, late 1970s). He served as a campus pastor in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1955-61); Northeastern Director of the National Lutheran Campus Ministry; and pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion, Philadelphia (1984-95).”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eT3-QRxEY> An instrumental version. “Christian Hymn Series, Hymns of Trust” “The Christian Hymn Series releases easy listening music of your favorite Christian Hymns, organized by Hymn topic. The musical arrangements include various instruments including flute, woodwinds, strings, piano, and harp.” <http://christianhymnseries.com/>

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

**Isaiah 42:14-21; RCL (Revised Common Lectionary), Numbers 21:4-9 (Next Week: Ezekiel 37:1-14; RCL, Jeremiah 31:31-34)**

*“The final verse of the pericope governs our use of it and its context in chapter 42. The Lord takes pleasure (צפצף)—he gets a kick out of—placing his instruction, the script of the conversation he wishes to have with his human creatures (תורה), before them. He does so in accord with his righteousness. Preaching on this text will be framed by our need to be listening to the Lord and to be acknowledging and basking in his righteousness (צדקה), his being the way he is, compassionate, merciful, fatherly.*

#### **Context**

*Whether we label the context of this text the entire Scripture, the entire book of Isaiah, or chapter 42, the context brings two words to bear on his hearers’ hearts: words of threat and words of promise. Chapter 42 begins with the first of the songs of the servant, who as a bruised reed faithfully establishes righteousness among the peoples as he delivers the Lord’s instruction (42:1–4). The Lord is the Creator who gives light to the blind and frees the prisoners (42:6–8), words paraphrased in Isaiah 61 and used by Jesus to identify himself and describe his own ministry (Lk 4:18). This leads to praise for God, whose might is displayed against his enemies (42:10–13). In this Sunday’s text God expresses his anger, disgust, and hurt, all reactions to the unfaithfulness of his people, but he also renews his promise to deliver them, themes which continue in what follows the text...” <http://concordiatheology.org/2014/03/lent-4-%E2%80%A2-isaiah-4214-21-%E2%80%A2-march-30-2014/>*

“...*The Servant establishes a new covenant to save the nations. Through the work of the Lord’s Servant, the song of salvation reaches all people. Israel fails to believe and live as God’s servant, and is punished with exile...*” **Lutheran Bible Companion, Volume 1, pages 731/2**

<sup>14</sup> For a long time I have held my peace;  
 I have kept still and restrained myself;  
 now I will cry out like a woman in labor;  
 I will gasp and pant.  
<sup>15</sup> I will lay waste mountains and hills,  
 and dry up all their vegetation;  
 I will turn the rivers into islands,<sup>[a]</sup>  
 and dry up the pools.  
<sup>16</sup> And I will lead the blind  
 in a way that they do not know,  
 in paths that they have not known  
 I will guide them.  
 I will turn the darkness before them into light,  
 the rough places into level ground.  
 These are the things I do,  
 and I do not forsake them.  
<sup>17</sup> They are turned back and utterly put to shame,  
 who trust in carved idols,  
 who say to metal images,  
 “You are our gods.”

### **Israel's Failure to Hear and See**

<sup>18</sup> Hear, you deaf,  
 and look, you blind, that you may see!  
<sup>19</sup> Who is blind but my servant,  
 or deaf as my messenger whom I send?  
 Who is blind as my dedicated one,<sup>[b]</sup>  
 or blind as the servant of the LORD?  
<sup>20</sup> He sees many things, but does not observe them;  
 his ears are open, but he does not hear.  
<sup>21</sup> The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness' sake,  
 to magnify his law and make it glorious.

a. [Isaiah 42:15](#) Or *into coastlands*

Footnotes from the Lutheran Study Bible:

42:14 The Lord. *like a woman in labor. In battle with His enemies, God is cast in the role of a mighty man of war (vs 13)* An even more daring comparison describes Him as a pregnant woman. *gasp and pant. When time of delivery comes, a woman can cry out in desperation but cannot delay the birth of her child. Though He restrained Himself for a long time, nothing can prevent the Lord from keeping His promise to open the way of forgiveness for fallen humankind.*”

42:18-20 Whereas the previous Servant (vv 1-9) did the work of the Lord, this one (Israel, v 24) does not. This description recalls Isaiah's commission. (6:9-13)

**Psalm 142; RCL, Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 (Psalm 130, RCL, Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16)**

*"..This Maschil is written for our instruction. It teaches us principally by example how to order our prayer in times of distress. Such instruction is among the most needful, practical, and effectual parts of our spiritual education. He who has learned how to pray has been taught the most useful of the arts and sciences...*

*(David) was in one of his many lurking places, either Engedi, Adullam, or some other lone cavern wherein he could conceal himself from Saul and his blood hounds. Caves make good closets for prayer; their gloom and solitude are helpful to the exercise of devotion. Had David prayed as much in his palace as he did in his cave, he might never have fallen into the act which brought such misery upon his later days.*

<http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/treasury/ps142.htm>

**A Maskil<sup>[a]</sup> of David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer.**

142 With my voice I cry out to the LORD;  
with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> I pour out my complaint before him;  
I tell my trouble before him.

<sup>3</sup> When my spirit faints within me,  
you know my way!

In the path where I walk  
they have hidden a trap for me.

<sup>4</sup> Look to the right and see:  
there is none who takes notice of me;  
no refuge remains to me;  
no one cares for my soul.

<sup>5</sup> I cry to you, O LORD;  
I say, "You are my refuge,  
my portion in the land of the living."

<sup>6</sup> Attend to my cry,  
for I am brought very low!  
Deliver me from my persecutors,  
for they are too strong for me!

<sup>7</sup> Bring me out of prison,  
that I may give thanks to your name!  
The righteous will surround me,  
for you will deal bountifully with me.

- a. [Psalm 142:1](#) Probably a musical or liturgical term

“...The Story of Psalm 142

This psalm is a "maskil". There are 13 psalms called maskils. They are 32, 42, 44, 45, 52-55, 74, 78, 88, 89 and 142. Bible students think that "maskil" means:

- either a psalm with something special to teach, like 32 and 78, or
- a psalm that the \*psalmist wrote in a very clever way. (The \*psalmist is the person who wrote the psalms.)

David wrote this maskil in a cave. It is a \*prayer to the \*LORD. We say \*prayers when we talk to God. David was in trouble (or "had trouble".) His enemies were trying to catch him. He does not say who these enemies were. There are two stories about David hiding in a cave. A cave is a hole in the side of a hill. One story is in 1 Samuel 22, the other is in 1 Samuel 24. David feels safe in the cave, but he does not want to stay in it. It seems as if the cave is a prison. But there are no friends to give him help. He writes "Nobody cares about me". This means "Nobody loves me enough to give me help". But the \*LORD God can send him help. This psalm prays for that help..." <http://www.easyenglish.info/psalms/psalm142-taw.htm>

### **Ephesians 5:8-14; RCL, Ephesians 2:1-10 (Romans 8:1-11; RCL, Hebrews 5:5-10)**

*"In the midst of a group of complex lessons (not in sequence) from Romans, this pericope from Ephesians suddenly appears.*

*It accompanies the dramatic Johannine story of the man healed of blindness (John 9:1-41). The first reading (1 Samuel 16:1-13) tells the story of God's choice of David as a young boy to be king of Israel. This lesson might not be the obvious choice for preaching, but it amply rewards the one who takes it up..." (continued after reading)*

<sup>7</sup>Therefore do not become partners with them; <sup>8</sup>for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup>and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup>But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup>for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.” (Isaiah 60:1-2?)

“...First and foremost, this passage is about the present lives to the people to whom it was addressed. Loaded with verbs in the imperative moods, verses 10 and 11 begin with commands to baptized believers. "Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord," on the one hand and "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness," on the other are the two identical

callings of Christians. For those concerned that kind of language does not proclaim the gospel, rejoice. The first verse, the rubric for engaging this particular passage, declares clearly and firmly that once the hearers were children of darkness, but now in the Lord (note: not by their own power), the hearers are "children of light." This entire passage is about what that means for daily life. Perhaps, Lent is a good time to consider that question, phrased cogently in Luke's narrative,

"How then shall we live?"  
"Live," says Ephesians, "as children of light." (v.8)

The letter to the Ephesians seems to have been a baptismal sermon circulated in letter form in Asia Minor. It is not clear if originally it was designated as for persons living in Ephesus. If it were, however, all the better for us. For Ephesus was a large city of diverse populations, home to numerous shrines and deities, and especially to the great temple of Artemis. In this sophisticated, pluralistic city, Christians would have been a distinct minority. Perhaps many of those among and for whom we preach these days feel the same way in this diverse, "sophisticated" world. Yet, the way of living does not call for fear, crouching in safe places, keeping things quiet. The way that children of light are called to live involves being awake.

The lectionary cuts off the reading before Ephesians concrete examples come up, but preachers should have them in mind. Verses 15-20 have some very clear suggestions, as do the better known verses following 5:21. Being awake involves "understanding the will of the Lord," being filled with the Spirit (rather than wine), "singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts," and "giving thanks to God at all times." These suggestions include activities, but even more they delineate a way of life, a transformation of the person and the community. Refraining from debauchery is simply a precondition of an ability to focus on God's gifts with thanksgiving and energy..."

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=30](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=30) [Sarah Henrich](#)  
*Professor Emeritus of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN*



Sure it's a bad pun, but sometimes we have to go for the low-hanging fruit.

**“The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 9th Chapter”**  
**“Glory to You, O Lord”**

**John 9:1-41 or John 9 1-7, 13-17, 34-39; RCL, John 3:14-21 (John 11:1-45 (46-53) or John 11:17-27, 38-53; RCL, John 12:20-33)**

*“Some passages are simply too rich to be only heard. They need to be experienced. Such is the case with this week’s story of the man born blind in John 9.*

*So here’s my proposition. This reading is all about sight, particularly, seeing as a metaphor for believing. Words for blindness, sight, seeing, and so forth crop up 24 times in this 41-verse story. But let’s be clear, “seeing” isn’t only a metaphor. The man born blind really can’t see. And when he regains his sight his life is literally transformed. So what would it be like to give folks a physical experience of both not seeing and seeing?... “*

*<https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=1583> **David Lose** President, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Penn*

### Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

9 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, **“It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”** <sup>6</sup> Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud <sup>7</sup> and said to him, **“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”** (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

*<sup>8</sup> The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” <sup>9</sup> Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” <sup>10</sup> So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” <sup>11</sup> He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.” <sup>12</sup> They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”*

<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup> So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

<sup>18</sup> The Jews<sup>[a]</sup> 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 <sup>19</sup> and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” <sup>22</sup> (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus<sup>[b]</sup> to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) <sup>23</sup> Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

<sup>24</sup> So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.” <sup>25</sup> He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” <sup>26</sup> They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” <sup>27</sup> 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?” <sup>28</sup> And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” <sup>30</sup> The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. <sup>32</sup> Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” <sup>34</sup> They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “**Do you believe in the Son of Man?**”<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>36</sup> He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “**You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.**” <sup>38</sup> He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “**For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.**” <sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, “**If you were blind, you would have no guilt;<sup>[d]</sup> but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.**”

- a. [John 9:18](#) Greek *Ioudaioi* probably refers here to Jewish religious leaders, and others under their influence, in that time; also verse [22](#)
- b. [John 9:22](#) Greek *him*
- c. [John 9:35](#) Some manuscripts *the Son of God*
- d. [John 9:41](#) Greek *you would not have sin*

**“This is the Gospel of the Lord”**      “Praise to You, O Christ”

“...Characteristics of the miracle

1. It is only related by St. John.



2. Like each of the few miracles in St. John, it is described with great minuteness and particularity.
3. It is one of the four miracles wrought in Judaea, or near Jerusalem, mentioned in St. John. He records eight great miracles together: four in Galilee--turning the water into wine, healing the nobleman's son, feeding the multitude, and walking on the water (chaps. 2, 4, and 6); and four in Judaea--purifying the Temple, healing the impotent man, restoring sight to the blind, and raising Lazarus (chaps. 2; 5; 6; and 9).
4. It is one of those miracles which the Jews were especially taught to expect in Messiah's time: "In that day shall the eyes of the blind see out of obscurity" (Isaiah 29:18).
5. It is one of those signs of Messiah having come, to which Jesus particularly directed John the Baptist's attention: "The blind receive their sight" (Matthew 11:5).
6. It was a miracle worked in so public a place, and on a man so well known, that it was impossible for the Jerusalem Jews to deny it. It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to bid any well-instructed Christian observe the singularly instructive and typical character of each of the eight miracles which John was inspired to record. Each was a vivid picture of spiritual things. Hengstenberg observes, that three of the four great miracles wrought by Christ in Judaea, exactly represent the three classes of works referred to in Matthew 11:5 : "The lame walk, the blind see, the dead are raised up" (John 5:1-47; Joh\_9:1-41; Joh\_11:1-57). (*Bp. Ryle.*)..."  
<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tbi/john-9.html>

"This week's text is another in a series of encounters with Jesus in John with this one focused, along with the Old Testament text, on seeing rightly.

Blindness and sight are explicitly mentioned in 24 of the chapter's 41 verses, including the first and last ones. The details of the miracle itself are repeated four times -- that Jesus put mud on the eyes of the blind man and then he regained his sight. At the center of the narrative, standing before the healing and eternally after it, is Jesus, the giver of sight and the very light of the world in which true sight becomes possible.

The story is linked thematically to the Feast of Tabernacles, which is the setting for chapters 7 and 8. The Pool of Siloam, where the man born blind is sent to wash his eyes, figured in water ceremonies at the festival, and Jesus has already invited the thirsty to come to him and drink on the great day of the festival in 7:37-38. Light was also an important theme, and Jesus declares himself the light of the world at the festival in 8:12 and again here in 9:5...

We also ask how the narrative reflects our lives today, the lives of the people in front of the text for whom the narrative is also life-shaping. In some places even now, it is risky to be a Christian, and even in some contexts in the United States and Western Europe, where Christianity is often, sadly, too tame or too much in line with the prejudices and desires of the powers that be to be threatening to anyone, it is sometimes no longer socially desirable to be a Christian. At the very least John insists, as do all of the evangelists, that we are living in an alternative reality that sets us apart.

As the fruit of Jesus' vine, we are on display and stand for something Other. If we never find ourselves at odds at all with the powerful and the status quo, that perhaps should give us pause. The blind man, unlike his parents, has the courage again and again to say what he knows, to speak truth to power, to tell what he can about the amazing grace by which he has been touched.

This is fundamentally a story about grace, and the blind man sums it up beautifully for all of us: "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=906](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=906) **Meda Stamper** *Leicestershire, England* Meda Stamper is a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) with a Ph.D. in New Testament from Princeton Theological Seminary. She has served in congregational ministry in the United Reformed Church in England and has developed one-woman performances of John, Mark, Philippians, Jonah, and the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke. Meda is interested in how multi-dimensional engagement with texts (spiritual, creative, and intellectual) may help us embody the good news in our lives...

..Commentaries have neatly divided the chapter into an isolated drama of seven scenes narrating the aftermath of Jesus' healing of the man born blind, who never asked to be healed in the first place. Interpreters have been content to let the meaning of the story reside in the miracle itself, when actually, Jesus himself comments on the healing in 10:1-21. Jesus does not stop talking in 9:41--he keeps on going and Jesus' words in 10:1-21 function as the discourse that interprets the meaning of the healing of the blind man which is a recurring structural pattern in the Gospel of John. Jesus performs a sign (shmei/a in the Fourth Gospel) which is followed by dialogue and then commentary from Jesus that provides the theological framework through which to interpret the meaning of the sign. When the discourse on the healing of the blind man is ignored in the interpretation of John 9, the events in chapter 9 are not allowed their full meaning and impact.

Unfortunately, the lectionary significantly complicates the issue. 9:1-41 is the lectionary text for Lent 4 in Year A, but we must wait until Easter 4 in Year A to hear the first part of the discourse (10:1-10) and then Easter 4 in Year B to hear the rest of the discourse (11-18). Moreover, we do not read 10:19-21 where the division among the Jews over whether or not Jesus has a demon and if a demon can open the eyes of the blind directly connects Jesus' words in chapter 10 to the healing of the blind man in chapter 9...

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=45](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=45) **Karoline Lewis** *Associate Professor of Preaching and the Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.*

<https://www.sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/john-91-41> gives an extensive verse by verse commentary.



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