Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 15

The Collect and Psalms will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer
The Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel will be read from the English Standard Version Bible Anglicized

The Collect: Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

16 The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him
from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the
Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” 2 And Samuel said,
“How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.” And the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you
and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ 3 And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will
show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you.”
4 Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city
came to meet him trembling and said, “Do you come peaceably?” 5 And he said,
“Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me
to the sacrifice.” And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.
6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord's anointed is before
him.” 7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his
stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the
outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and
made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” 9 Then
Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.”
10 And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The
Lord has not chosen these.” 11 Then Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And
he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.” And

Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here.”
12 And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was
handsome. And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him, for this is he.” 13 Then Samuel took the
horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed
upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Psalm: Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd; *
    I shall not be in want.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures *
    and leads me beside still waters.
3 He revives my soul *
    and guides me along right pathways for his Name’s sake.
4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
  I shall fear no evil; *
    for you are with me;
    your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
5 You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; *
    you have anointed my head with oil,
    and my cup is running over.
6 Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, *
    and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-14

8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of
light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to
discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but
instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in
secret. 13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that

becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,
“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”
Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: John 9:1-41

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

8 The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” 9 Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” 10 So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” 11 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.”
12 They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15 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.” 16 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. 17 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.”

18 The Jews 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 19 and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” 20 His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. 21 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.” 22 (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) 23 Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

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

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

The Gospel of the Lord

On March 12th we celebrate the life of Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome. Read from A Great Cloud of Witnesses.

Only two Popes, Leo I and Gregory I, have been given the popular title of “the Great.” Both served in the difficult times of the barbarian invasions of Italy. Gregory also knew the horrors of “plague, pestilence, and famine.” He was born of a patrician family about 540, and became Prefect of Rome in 573. Shortly thereafter he retired to a monastic life in a community which he founded in his ancestral home on the Coelian Hill. Pope Pelagius II made him Ambassador to Constantinople in 579, where he learned much about the larger affairs of the Church. Not long after his return home, Pope Pelagius died of the plague, and in 590, Gregory was elected as his successor.

Gregory’s pontificate was one of strenuous activity. He organized the defense of Rome against the attacks of the Lombards and fed its populace from papal granaries in Sicily. In this, as in other matters, he administered “the patrimony of St. Peter” with energy and efficiency. His ordering of the Church’s liturgy and chant has molded the spirituality of the Western Church until the present day. Though unoriginal in theology, his writings provided succeeding generations with basic texts, especially the Pastoral Care, a classic on the work of the ministry.

In the midst of all his cares and duties, Gregory prepared and fostered the evangelizing mission to the Anglo-Saxons under Augustine and other monks from his own monastery. The Venerable Bede justly called Gregory “The Apostle of the English.”

Gregory died on March 12, 604, and was buried in St. Peter’s Basilica. His life was a true witness to the title he assumed for his office: “Servant of the servants of God.”

Let us pray: Almighty and merciful God, you raised up Gregory of Rome to be a servant of the servants of God, and inspired him to send missionaries to preach the Gospel to the English people: Preserve in your Church the catholic and apostolic faith they taught, that your people, being fruitful in every good work, may receive the crown of glory that never fades away; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**