

**Lectionary readings: 1 Samuel 16: 1-13; Psalm 23;
Ephesians 5: 8-14; John 9: 1-41 (4th Sunday in Lent)**

For reflection and prayer

- **1 Samuel 16:** *'Men and women look at the face; God looks into the heart.'* (v7 The Message) In a society that seems to stress image and outward appearance, we would do well to remember that it's not outward appearance that matters; it is not the outward trappings of religion that matter, but the state of our hearts. Are we allowing God to touch us at a deep level? Are we afraid to allow God to come close? Are we aware that, like David, we too are God's chosen ones? *'The Spirit of God entered David like a rush of wind, God vitally empowering him for the rest of his life.'* (v13 The Message) Let's open ourselves to God this week so that His Spirit blows into us like a breath of fresh air.
- **Psalm 23:** *'O my Beloved, you are my shepherd; I shall not want; you bring me to green pastures for rest and lead me beside still waters renewing my spirit. You restore my soul. You lead me in the path of goodness to follow Love's way. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow and of death, I am not afraid; for you are ever with me; your rod and your staff they guide me; they give me strength and comfort. You prepare a table before me in the presence of all my fears; you bless me with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the heart of the Beloved forever.'* (Psalms for Praying)

- **Ephesians 5:** v10: *'Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.'* This is our task as Christians in the little things as well as the big. We have a responsibility to have God at the centre of our lives guiding us in our decisions, influencing how we speak, how we treat people, how we respond to situations and the everyday circumstances of life. This is how we will let the light of God's presence light up our lives and shed light in a dark world. Let's try this week to find out what is pleasing to the Lord in our responses and everyday living.
- **John 9:** The Pharisees couldn't rejoice that a man had received his sight; they were far more taken up with the fact that a rule had been broken. Because Jesus didn't keep the religious law, the Pharisees concluded he must be a bad man. All the blind man knew was: *'I was blind ... now I see.'* The Pharisees were the ones who claimed they knew God and yet they showed themselves to be more blind than anyone. Are we like the Pharisees holding on to what we have always done to serve God? What if God wants to lead us to a new way of seeing Him, a new way of serving Him? It was safe and gave the Pharisees a sense of security to hold on to their rituals and rules. To accept that Jesus came from God and to follow Him would have been scary and unpredictable and demanded a commitment and change they were not prepared to make. This week let's look at our blindness and ask ourselves whether we are prepared to allow God to open our spiritual eyes and expand our vision, leading to a new way of being a Christian in today's world. Let's allow God to touch our hearts and so change us. But perhaps that's the very problem - we don't want to be changed?