Our Sunday Readings

THE FIRST READING
Choosing a new king

When the prophet Samuel sets off for Bethlehem, Saul is king of Israel. Samuel worries that Saul will kill him for choosing a new king, which is technically an act of treason. God tells Samuel to say that he’s going off to make a sacrifice to God. The sacrifice becomes the context in which David is anointed.

Jesse introduces his sons by starting with the oldest one. Typically the oldest son was given the highest honor, and Eliab looked the part: he was strong and handsome. God tells Samuel that the new king must not simply look good, he must have the right abilities and disposition.

THE PRAYER

Lord Jesus, Light of the World, We walk by your light. Manifest yourself to all who seek your face, and be merciful when we persist in blindness. Reveal the darkness that is within and around us. Show us how to turn away from darkness in order to walk more boldly by your light. Expose injustice. Illuminate the way to peace. Dispel the gloom of all who suffer, and brighten the lives of all who feel lost and alone. Bring us all into your everlasting radiance. We ask this in your holy name. Amen.
THE GOSPEL READING

Setting the scene
John 1:19 – 12 is called The Book of Signs because in it Jesus works signs that help people believe that he is God's Son and the world's savior. The blind man and the Samaritan woman symbolize every person who comes to believe the truth about Jesus.

Some people deny Jesus' identity. In John 8 Jesus and some Pharisees argue about whether he truly is the light whom the Father has sent. The tension builds as Jesus now works his next sign.

The healing
The Gospel-writer defines the term Siloam as Sent. The one who anoints the man’s eyes and sends him to the pool to wash is the one God sent into the world. Jesus uses saliva because it was thought to have healing properties. Washing points ahead to Christian baptism.

The controversy begins
Jesus warns that not everyone will accept him: the night is coming when he will be crucified by those who reject him. At that time it will be impossible to do the work of bringing people to faith (vv.4-5).

The neighbors’ disagreement about the man’s identity represents the controversy about Jesus’ identity (vv.8-9). Just as some of the neighbors think the man is the same person who was born blind while others don’t, some people believe Jesus is from God while others don’t.

A division among them
The disagreement continues among the religious authorities as a second source of controversy is introduced: Jesus has worked on a day in which no work was supposed to be done.

The Pharisees become stubborn in their disbelief, even denying that the man had actually been blind. Meanwhile, the man who once didn’t know where Jesus was now knows that “he is a prophet” (v.17).

Irony
The story contains several ironic contrasts that increase the tension among the various people.
- The Pharisees urge the man to tell the truth, but that’s what he’s been doing the whole time.
- Jesus told his disciples the man wasn’t blind because of a past wrongdoing, but the religious authorities assume that his blindness was a form of punishment.
- The religious experts don’t accept that Jesus is from God, but the person they call totally sinful does.
- The more the Pharisees reject the man’s claims, the more boldly he speaks.

Blinding themselves
The story reaches its climax when the man states what he now sees with perfect clarity. The Pharisees, however, angrily refuse to see what he does. They’re so sure of themselves that they’ve blinded themselves to the light God has sent into the world (vv.40-41).

Judgment
Jesus isn’t the judge; we are. Jesus stands in a courtroom in which we must make a verdict for or against him. Those who believe him turn toward the light, while those who reject him turn away.