



FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4–10 (if before Transfiguration)

LECTIONARY 5

FIRST READING: **Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12]**

A reading from Isaiah.

¹Shout out; do not hold back!
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
²Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they want God on their side.

³“Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day
and oppress all your workers.
⁴You fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.
⁵Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

FIRST READING *Isaiah = eye-ZAY-uh*

The reader will find the best advice in the first line of verse 1: “do not hold back!” This is the voice of an angry God, dripping with sarcasm. Help the assembly feel the wrath. Do not hold back. The voice changes to that of the prophet at verse 9b. Establish the change with a significant pause and a more tempered sound.

⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
 and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you;
 the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
^{9a}Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
 you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."

[^{9b}If you remove the yoke from among you,
 the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry
 and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
 and your gloom be like the noonday.
¹¹The LORD will guide you continually
 and satisfy your needs in parched places
 and make your bones strong,
and you shall be like a watered garden,
 like a spring of water
 whose waters never fail.
¹²Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
 you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
 the restorer of streets to live in.]

Word of God, word of life. or The word of the Lord.

PSALMODY: Psalm 112:1-9 [10]

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 [13-16]

A reading from First Corinthians.

¹When I came to you, brothers and sisters,
I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God to you
with superior speech or wisdom.
²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ
and him crucified.
³And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ▶

SECOND READING

This is one of those readings that merits a warning siren. If it is to be effectively read, the reader will need to invest some significant time pondering, in advance of practicing out loud. (The best preparation for reading aloud in public is reading aloud in private.) The words themselves are instructive and demand a careful and patient reading if the assembly is to follow the line of reasoning and be edified.

⁴My speech and my proclamation were made
not with persuasive words of wisdom
but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
⁵so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom
but on the power of God.

⁶Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom,
though it is not a wisdom of this age
or of the rulers of this age, who are being destroyed.
⁷But we speak God's wisdom, a hidden mystery,
which God decreed before the ages for our glory
⁸and which none of the rulers of this age understood,
for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

⁹But, as it is written,
“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰God has revealed to us through the Spirit,
for the Spirit searches everything,
even the depths of God.

¹¹For what human knows what is truly human
except the human spirit that is within?
So also no one comprehends what is truly God's
except the Spirit of God.

¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world
but the Spirit that is from God,
so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.

[¹³And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom
but taught by the Spirit,
interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit,
for they are foolishness to them,
and they are unable to understand them
because they are spiritually discerned.

¹⁵Those who are spiritual discern all things,
and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

¹⁶“For who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?”

But we have the mind of Christ.]

Word of God, word of life.

or

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:13-20

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said:

¹³“You are the salt of the earth,
but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?
It is no longer good for anything
but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world.

A city built on a hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket;
rather, they put it on the lampstand,
and it gives light to all in the house.

¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works
and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;
I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

¹⁸For truly I tell you,
until heaven and earth pass away,
not one letter, not one stroke of a letter,
will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

¹⁹Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments
and teaches others to do the same
will be called least in the kingdom of heaven,
but whoever does them and teaches them
will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰For I tell you,
unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL

Readers will be helped to slow their reading pace—especially when approaching familiar texts such as this one. Give each image, each line of reasoning in these eight verses adequate breathing space. The pastoral ministry is one of word and sacrament. Give the word its due.