

Lectionary Texts for March 26, 2024 • *Tuesday of Holy Week* - Year B
Isaiah 49:1-7 • Psalm 71:1-14 • 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 • John 12:20-36



John 12:20-36

The Light of the World, 1853, by William Holman Hunt, English, 1827-1910

Oil on canvas, 1'-11" x 4'-1"

Side Chapel, Keble College, Oxford, England

In this allegorical painting, William Holman Hunt depicted the figure of Christ to emphasize solidity and mass. This is in contrast to conventional religious art at the time, as suggested in *Victorian Web* (www.victorianweb.org): "In England you know spiritual figures are painted as if in vapour....the Christ that is alive for ever more. He was to be firmly and substantially there waiting for the stirring of the sleeping soul."

Continued

Known for his great attention to detail, vivid color, and elaborate symbolism, Hunt traveled to the Middle East to observe the rising of the sun to create the morning light for this painting. With dawn in the distance, the morning star hovers faintly above the head of Christ. Two other lights provide visual metaphors. The light of the lantern, which provides the most light in the work, has been interpreted as the light of conscience, truth, and Christian doctrine. The light around Christ's head represents the light of salvation.

Other visual metaphors include the handle-less door representing the human soul, and rusty nails and hinges overgrown with ivy tell the viewer that the door has never been opened. Autumn weeds and fallen fruit represent the autumn of life. As though to spell it out for those who don't perceive these metaphors, Hunt has placed at the bottom these now-illegible verses from Revelation 3: "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me. "

Although Hunt's works initially were attacked in the art press as clumsy and ugly, he ultimately became famous for his religious paintings. This painting became extremely popular in nineteenth-century England and America and influenced popular poetry and book illustrations. He later created a similar, larger version of this work that toured the world and is now in St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

— Art curated and narrative provided by Norman Mahan
Document edited and produced by Donna V. Adair
Lay members, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston

Isaiah 49:1-7

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away!

The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away.

And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the Lord, and my reward with my God."

And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength — he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

Psalm 71:1-14

In you, O Lord, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame.

In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me.

Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.

For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.

Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb. My
praise is continually of you.

I have been like a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.

My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all day long.

Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent.

For my enemies speak concerning me, and those who watch for my life consult together.

They say, "Pursue and seize that person whom God has forsaken, for there is no one to deliver."

O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!

Let my accusers be put to shame and consumed; let those who seek to hurt me be covered with
scorn and disgrace.

But I will hope continually, and will praise you yet more and more.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

Where is the one who is wise?

Where is the scribe?

Where is the debater of this age?

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish

in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

John 12:20-36

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say — 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name."

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light."

After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.