

## EPIPHANY 5B - 2018

Isaiah 40:21-31

Psalm 147: 1-12, 21c

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Mark 1:29-39

What is today? [Take Answers; *Sunday, February 4, Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany...*]

Today has several different names and meanings. It is February 4, which translated literally from the Latin *februum* means the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the month of purification. Anglo-Saxons called this month *Solmoneth* (mud month). On the church calendar, it is the Fifth Sunday after The Epiphany! If you had been in an Episcopal Church fifty years ago, the title of today would have read: **Sexagesima**. That word, *sexuagesima*, literally means sixty days before Easter. Actually, there are a few less than 60 days before Easter, but, that was the tradition. There was a pre-Lenten season that lasted three weeks and included *Septuagesima* Sunday, this Sunday, and *Quinquagesima* Sunday. We abandoned those names and some of the themes of that pre-Lenten season. Now, we just keep going with the current season,,??? *Epiphany*.

In the world of Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts, today is Scout Sunday. We have emblems that match the bulletin cover for Scouts, who to celebrate the beginning of Scout Week, which ends with Scout Sabbath next Saturday. We welcome all our Scout visitors and will give you a chance to introduce yourselves later.

You may be also thinking about another name for today! Your mind may be elsewhere...**Why???** Because in the secular world, today has a special name. It's....????...SUPERBOWL SUNDAY!!! In honor of the Superbowl, let's have a scripture and sports quiz:

- This New Jersey Hockey team share a name with the spiritual force of evil in the world – **NEW JERSEY (OR ALBANY) DEVILS**
- There are two OT books, #1X and #2X, that share the name of this California basketball team – **Sacramento Kings**

- In the First Book of Kings, the birds that fed Elijah while he hid from Jezebel in the Kerith Ravine (1 Kings 17) are the birds that this are the mascot for an East Coast football team: **Baltimore Ravens**
- The descendants of a Philistine named Rapha were described like this; so are a West Coast baseball team and an East Coast football team (2 Samuel) – **New York Giants (football)**
- Solomon lined the steps leading to his throne with statues of these animals (1 Kings 10) – **Detroit Lions**
- This football team uses the name that the apostle Paul used to describe the believers in Rome and other cities (Romans) – **The New Orleans Saints**
- This football team is described in the First Reading in your bulletin insert, you heard it read just a while ago: **Philadelphia Eagles!!!!**

The SuperBowl hoo-haa did lead me to consider the theme of today's scriptures. This

season of Epiphany is about God's glory IN the world; in part, the way that God uses people to show forth his glory in the world. Just as football players suffer ongoing injury and rehabilitation, acquiring scars and chronic injuries that last a lifetime, just to gain victory and glory on the field; we are called to a challenging role as Jesus' disciples. God calls for us to follow him on the paths of glory, but those paths of glory often lead through pain, self-sacrifice and sorrow. There may be wounds and injuries that heal slowly or not at all.

We will talk a lot about self-denial and suffering in the upcoming season of Lent. But, today we talk about our goal as God's people, as Christians. We celebrate Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension. Our goal is continuing to believe the truth of Jesus and to share it with all the people of our world, so that they may believe, too. Our team goal, according to the Catechism in the prayerbook is this: *The mission of the Church is*

*to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.*

No one is shy about saying they support their favorite football team. We know that Bill Chapman is Giant's guy. I see Eagles green here and there among the crowd. We are more shy about saying we are Christians, or that we believe in unity, rather than dividing people into groups, "us and them". Each of us in God's family are called to be Christ's light. Remember the parable about not hiding your light under a basket? Maybe you've heard the song and the hand movements!

*Hide it under a bushel? NO!; Don't let Satan blow it out!*

The song is meant to remind Christians to hold their light high! Do not be afraid to talk about your faith and what God has done in your life. Do not be afraid to step out to reunite people and make peace around you. Maybe more importantly, in light of Superbowl Sunday; we are called to support each other as a team. We win or lose together, working out God's plan for our neighborhood. God's team is

our team. We sometimes show precious little team spirit or enthusiasm for our side. That's really surprising, since we already know that are on the winning team!!

Today's readings are full of references we can tie to the football culture that reigns today. In the second reading, Paul reminds the people in Corinth that he is entrusted with a commission from God and that they are entrusted with work by God, too. You can think about Paul's flexible spirit as the best kind of team play. When he played with a team made of Jewish disciples in Jerusalem – he used their playbook and ran their plays. When he was living and playing with the Gentiles in Ephesus, he used their playbook and ran their plays. He stood up for what he believed, but he was flexible about how he did it. He wanted to win hearts for God, so he put aside his own training and experience, his own preferred way of doing things, and did whatever it took to be part of the team he was working to develop. He writes: **“I do it all for the**

**sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.”** Our work for the Gospel requires that we be part of the team and do our best.

God knows your strengths and weaknesses. If you are weak in doing something, God will strengthen you for the work you are to do. The Scouts know that if they set out to earn a badge, they don't know how to do all the steps needed to get to that badge. They need to stretch and grow. They have to get help and work with parents, leaders and other scouts.

Much of the time, God will ask you to do things you can accomplish. A football coach does not ask the quarterback to take the worst kind of punishment; he protects him when it's possible. He does not ask the kicker to go take the punishment that would be expected of a linebacker. God knows who you are and what you are capable of accomplishing. God knows what you are ready for. But you may have to call up your courage, your determination, and **JUST DO IT!** We are each filled

with God's glory through prayer, through the Bible, through Jesus' body and blood at the communion table, and simply through the ever-present grace of God in our lives. We are ready to play!

Let us pray:

**God, you created us to use our bodies to run and jump, to throw and catch; you created us to use our minds to think and feel, to reflect and express; you created us to relate our bodies and minds to connect with ourselves, each other, and you. In sports and athletic competition, we can engage our bodies and our minds, we can connect with ourselves, our community, and you. God, come near to us now and enjoy your creation as we worship you, the Creator.<sup>i</sup> Amen.** [The Joy of Sports, Baylor University](#)

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<sup>i</sup> [//www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/75237.pdf](http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/75237.pdf)