

Proper 24



Prayer of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ you have revealed your glory among the nations. Preserve the works of your mercy, that your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of your name; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Genesis 32:22-31

{22} The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. {23} He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. {24} Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. {25} When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. {26} Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." {27} So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." {28} Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." {29} Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. {30} So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." {31} The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

11. he: Jacob.

his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children: Genesis 29:16-30:24: Leah and Rachel; Bilhah and Zilpah; Rueben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph. Dinah is omitted and Benjamin has not yet been born.

28. You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans and have prevailed: See Hosea 12:2-3, "In the womb he tried to supplant his brother, and in his manhood he strove with God." The name "Jacob" is given a popular etymology for "grasping the heel" (Genesis 25:26), and "cheat" (Genesis 27:36). "Israel" is a new name given to mark his struggle with God (32:28), and his piety (Genesis 35:10).

Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved: "Peniel" means "God's face." Yahweh told Moses, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live," Exodus 33:20. John says, "No one has ever seen God." (John 1:18). Jesus says that the pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8).

31. [Jacob was] limping because of his hip: The "man" with whom Jacob wrestled dislocated Jacob's hip. In verse 32 this injury is adduced as the reason that Israelites to not eat the sciatic muscle, a peculiar dietary practice not referred to elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Penuel: Peniel, above, is used only here; Penuel is the customary name of the place. The two spellings reflect dialectical spelling differences.

Psalms 121

{1} I lift up my eyes to the hills-- from where will my help come? {2} My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. {3} He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. {4} He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. {5} The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. {6} The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by

night. {7} The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. {8} The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

This psalm produces by the simplicity of its language and piety a deep impression that continues until this day. It does not show us the bold soaring of a man's faith to the high places where the storms rage; it does not portray man's struggles and inner tensions—but with the calm and comforting assurance of an unshaken trust it takes its course in a peaceful and straightforward manner." [1] I assume that the Psalm was a part of a ceremony of dismissal from one of the festivals in the Temple.

1. *I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?*: The singer looks anxiously at the hills around Jerusalem and wonders about his/her safety as (s)he leaves the Temple and Jerusalem at the end of a festival.

2. *The Lord is your keeper...*: A priest reassures the psalmist that Yahweh is the source of security and protection.

3. *He will not let your foot be moved*: Verses 3-8 are a formal blessing, which may have its source in a formal cultic act in the sanctuary.

8. *The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in...forevermore*: The pilgrim is assured that Yahweh will continue to be with him until he returns for the next festival, even forever.

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

{14} But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, {15} and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. {16} All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, {17} so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.... {4:1} In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: {2} proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. {3} For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, {4} and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. {5} As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

15-16. *sacred writings...scripture*: The *Tanak* (Torah, Law; Nebiim, Prophets; Ketubim, Writings), or what we call the Old Testament.

5. *do the work of an evangelist*: "In the first-century Church 'evangelist' had already become a title of office (cf. Acts xxi.8; Eph. Iv.11), connoting according to some a missionary, according to others an official who exercised the functions of an apostle without being accorded the title. In this context...the word has its basic meaning of one who teaches and expounds the gospel." [2]

4:3. *accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires*: People will look for authorities who will support their wishes.

4:4. *turn away from...the truth and wander away to myths*: People seek confirmation of their convictions and ignore the truth in favor of fables that support them. Clearly Paul is contrasting the teachers and fables sought by faithless people with the truth of the scriptures and the soundness of evangelist who teaches it.

Luke 18:1-8

{1} Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. {2} He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. {3} In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' {4} For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, {5} yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice,

so that she may not wear me out by continually coming." {6} And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. {7} And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? {8} I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

1. *to pray always and not to loose heart*: The point of the parable is given clearly before the parable is told.

2. *a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people*: How this is to be understood is made clear in verse 6 where he is characterized as "the unjust judge," literally, "the judge of unrighteousness." He is an godless judge whose ignores his responsibility to judge righteously in the interests of the oppressed.

5. *wear me out*: Greek *hypopiadze*, "to strike in the eye," "to give a black eye to someone," "to annoy someone or to lessen their prestige." The shameless judge is finally willing to admit that the widow could damage his honor.

7. *will not God grant justice to his chosen ones*: The point of the parable is not that God can be pestered into action if one prays long enough, but that, unlike the judge, God will hear the cries of his elect and will act for his name's sake and vindicate them, if they trust him.

8. *when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*: It is the faith of those who hear Jesus' teaching that is in question here. Will his hearers, those who read the Gospel, those who hear the preaching, those who confess their faith, remain faithful, not just in word but also in deeds of love, or will they be like the judge of unrighteousness, neither fearing God nor respecting the people.

Reflection

The first lesson recalls Jacob's struggle with "a man" at the ford of the Jabbok. Although the outcome of the fight is unclear, Jacob wins a blessing from him. The Psalm reflects assurance to the fearful in the presence of unseen danger. Paul encourages Timothy to be faithful in the face of opposition.

The persistence of the woman in the parable has been repeated effectively in many situations. Gandhi's non-violent resistance has been emulated by others. The parable is not an invitation, though, to non-violent protest. The effectiveness of such protests depends on the susceptibility of the object of the protests to the influence of honor and shame. Many more corrupt or brutal regimes are not susceptible to such influence.

Hymns [3]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

250 --E--Open Now Thy

444 --E--With the Lord

295 --D--Out of the

701v --I--What Feast of Love

227 --II--How Blest Are

440 --G--Christians, While on

793s --G--O Lord, Hear (772v)

231, 237, 403, 443

Prayers of the People [4]

P or A: As members of one family in Christ, we pray to our gracious God saying, "Lord, in your mercy", and respond, "Hear our prayer."

A: We pray for the families of this congregation, that mother, father, son and daughter might live in loving relationships, and that differing opinions and perspectives might join to create a fuller picture of life in your world. Lord, in your mercy. Hear...

A: Let the music in our worship life be uplifting and inspired, as we praise you with instruments and voices united in harmony. Lord, in your mercy. Hear...

A: Inspire us anew by the story of Christ's death and resurrection--the story by which we have been called from death to life. As we are new creations in Christ, may this story take root in our hearts and our lives. Lord, in your mercy. Hear...

A: We pray for the healing of the sick and the dying, Lord, especially _____ and those whom we name in our hearts... . Lord, in your mercy. Hear...

A: That we may imitate the healed leper who fell at the feet of Jesus in thanksgiving. Remind us of all our blessings--above all the great gift of new life which you have prepared for us through Christ. Lord, in your mercy. Hear...

P: With great joy we raise our voices in prayer, trusting that you will listen to our spoken words and to our silent supplications. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Or [5]

Presider or deacon

Like the widow before the judge, let us persist in crying to God for every need.

Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For all peoples and their leaders, and for mercy and justice in the world.

For good weather, abundant fruits of the earth, and peaceful times.

For doctors, nurses, and hospital staff, and for all who work in the medical arts.

For the sick and the suffering, travelers and refugees, prisoners and their families, and the dying and dead.

For our city and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

Lifting our voices with all creation, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider God of the living and the dead, hear the prayers of your servants and give us strength to proclaim your message to all the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

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[1] Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962, p. 745.

[2] J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963, p. 207.

[3] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc0001.txt>

[4] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_c.txt

[5] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>