

Lent 3



Prayer of the Day

Eternal Lord, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your Word and obey it, so that we become instruments of your redeeming love; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Isaiah 55:1-9

{1} Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. {2} Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. {3} Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. {4} See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. {5} See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. {6} Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; {7} let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. {8} For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. {9} For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

1-5, 8-9: Yahweh is the speaker in these verses. He offers food and drink to the exiles as the exiles were provided with water (Exodus 17:1-7) and manna (Exodus 16:15). Food and drink are also offered by Wisdom (Proverbs 9:1-6).

3. *listen that you may live*: One lives from the wisdom one receives from God.

everlasting covenant...my steadfast, sure love for David: "Only in vs. 3 is Israel associated with David in Second Isaiah; and the allusion to David here contains no suggestion that Second Isaiah sees a restored monarchy in restored Israel.... The eternity of David's covenant is transferred to the covenant with Israel restored." [1]

5. *you shall call nations*: Restored Israel has a missionary task among the nations that do not know Yahweh, and who do not "know," that is, recognize Israel.

6-7: The prophet speaks, inviting the exiles to *seek the Lord...call upon him*. When Israel was in the land, this would be an invitation to seek an oracle in the Temple. "To seek Yahweh here is to seek forgiveness and to abandon a way of life." [2]

8-9. *my thoughts are not your thoughts*: While Yahweh's gracious purpose and intention to deliver his people is clearly perceived, the way Yahweh goes about accomplishing that purpose is beyond human comprehension.

Psalms 63:1-8

{1} O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. {2} So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. {3} Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. {4} So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name. {5} My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises

you with joyful lips {6} when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; {7} for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. {8} My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

2. *I have looked upon you in the sanctuary*: Like Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1), the singer has seen Yahweh in the Temple. Is this a theophany, or is it the acute sensitivity of one who expects to see Yahweh there.

3. *your steadfast love is better than life*: "Even life, which in the OT is 'the highest good,' pales in the brilliance of [*hesed*, "grace"], which alone provides the gift of satisfaction and fulfillment." [3]

4-8: The psalmist describes his/her response to Yahweh's steadfast love: "my lips will praise you," "I will call on your name," "my mouth praises you with joyful lips," "I will sing for joy," "my soul clings to you." The singer also identifies the *places* and *times* when (s)he will praise Yahweh: "as long as I live," "on my bed," in the watches of the night," in the shadow of your wings," and by implication in Yahweh's "right hand," in short, everywhere.

7. *the shadow of your wings*: Yahweh's wings are a refuge for all people (Psalm 36:8).

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

{1} I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, {2} and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, {3} and all ate the same spiritual food, {4} and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. {5} Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. {6} Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. {7} Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." {8} We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. {9} We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. {10} And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. {11} These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. {12} So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. {13} No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

1. *our ancestors*: Paul is writing to a Gentile congregation, so he speaks of his Israelite ancestors, and designates them "our ancestors," effectively including them within the family of the chosen people.

under the cloud...through the sea: According to the Masoretic (Hebrew) text of Exodus the cloud went in front of the Israelites. In the Septuagint (LXX) the people were under the cloud. They all passed through the Red Sea as they escaped the chariots of Pharaoh.

2. *baptized into Moses*: This is an interesting metaphorical use of "baptized." The idea is that the people of Israel were incorporated with Moses into Yahweh's purpose and action through their participation in the events of the cloud and the sea.

3-4. *all ate...all drank*: Throughout the Exodus all the people participated in the same spiritual experience. Their eating and drinking corresponds to the Christian sacrament of the Lord's Supper. "...Paul is thinking not of a real, Old Testament sacrament, but of a prefiguration." [4]

the rock was Christ: Christ was the operative principle in the events of the Exodus. "The 'was' of the typological statement, of the interpretation of the rock as being Christ, means

real preexistence, not merely symbolic significance." [5]

5. *God was not pleased with most of them*: Of Christ God said, "with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22), which indicates a strong, positive relationship. In the case of Paul's ancestors, their inclusion into God's purposes was not met with by active participation, but rather by complaining.

they were struck down in the wilderness: An allusion to Numbers 14:28-30. The point is that "baptism" into Moses in the sea is not a guarantee of salvation. The same is true for the "strong" in Corinth who believed that they could do anything because they were baptized. The argument is simple, "If God did not spare them, he will not spare us, for our situation is the same as theirs" (Calvin)." [6]

7-10. *some of them*: In verses 1-3, "all" share in the spiritual opportunities God provided in the wilderness. Now, we look at "some" with whom God was not pleased: idolaters, those who indulged in immorality, who put Christ (God) to the test, who complained. They "were struck down in the wilderness."

7-10: The episodes include the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:6); the women of Moab, (Numbers 25:1-18); the fiery serpents, (Numbers 21:5-9); occasions when the people complain, (Numbers 14:2, 27, 36f; 16:14, 49; 17:6ff).

11. *to serve as an example*: Not as a means to an end, but rather that we should be instructed by what happened to them.

13: Christians are tested and tempted, but God will provide a way out. Real Christians don't have to behave the way the "strong" in Corinth behaved in order to demonstrate how free they were.

Luke 13:1-9

{1} At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. {2} He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? {3} No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. {4} Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them--do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? {5} No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." {6} Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. {7} So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' {8} He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. {9} If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

1. *the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices*: This apparently well-known event is unknown in the historical sources of the time. Since sacrifice was only possible in the Temple, it must deal with Galileans who had come to Jerusalem, probably for Passover, with their sacrifices, and for some reason were killed on Pilate's orders. It fits well with Pilate's brutality, and it provides Jesus with the opportunity to comment on the need for timely repentance.

2: Jesus then mentions eighteen who were killed in a construction accident (verse 2). In both cases the unexpectedness of death precludes the act of repentance. This brief conversation leads into the parable which follows.

6-9: Like the fig tree which bore no fruit, sinners must either change their ways or be cut off. The gardener gains a bit of time for the tree to bear fruit, but unless it bears fruit it will be cut down. The time is uncertain, repentance is critical; "unless you repent you will all perish." "If one bears no fruit and continues one's unproductivity and procrastination, then that person should be ready to face the fate of the barren fig tree.... The Galileans may have

died by the malice of some human being; the eighteen Jerusalemites by chance.... But the fig tree will die expressly because of inactivity and unproductiveness. In the long run this becomes 'the greater sin.'" [7]

Reflection

The first lesson directs the hearer to "seek the Lord" and call upon him. Yahweh's thoughts and ways are directed toward the redemption of his people. The Psalm responds to the invitation of the first lesson. The psalmist is in the Temple (vs. 2); (s)he eagerly seeks Yahweh (vs. 1). (S)he thirsts for Yahweh (vs. 1), and marrow and fatness nourishes his/her soul (vs. 5). Yahweh's loving kindness (vs. 3) is better than life itself—as Yahweh's thoughts and ways are higher than ours. The psalmist rejoices and praises Yahweh with joyful lips (vs. 5).

In the Gospel Jesus begins by noting in the examples that are given that those who suffered were not necessarily any greater sinners than others. At the end he uses those examples and the parable of the fig tree to warn that though God patiently waits for sinners to repent, he will not wait forever. Time may run out, so timely repentance is necessary.

Hymns [8]

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

343 --E--Guide Me Ever,
378 --D--Amid the World's
15 --I--Seek the Lord
711v --I--You Satisfy (774s)

452 --P--As Pants the
341 --II--Jesus, Still Lead
497, 199, 401, 221, 504

Prayers of the People [9]

P or A: We praise God's name, for he is gracious and merciful, and will not test us beyond what we can bear. We commend our prayers to our merciful God, praying in Jesus' name, and responding, "Amen."

A: We are instructed by your word to forsake wicked ways and to trust in your mercy, for you are a God who will pardon abundantly. Draw your church to repentance and freedom from the human greed and ambition which lead your people to labour for that which does not satisfy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A: We reach out to the world by preaching your gospel and serving our brothers and sisters. As we do so, strengthen our words and deeds with the gift of humility. Encourage and direct us so that we do not in arrogance put your faithfulness to the test. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A: Help us to abandon notions of self-righteousness in relationships with family, friends, and co-workers. Remind us that each human story is sacred, and that our own stories are also coloured by the fallenness common to all humankind. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A: For all who suffer illness or face death, we pray to you, O God. Strengthen us to lend our prayers and open arms to support and comfort them. We think especially of _____. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A: We pray for all those who lead in this congregation--pastor(s), assistants, teachers, council members, and _____. Encourage them in the tasks of service to which you have called them, that in all that they do your name may be blessed. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

P: In our lives and prayer, let us seek the Lord that he may be found, giving us the gift of eternal life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Presider or deacon

As we come to the water of Christ, let us earnestly pray to God who gives drink to all who thirst.

Deacon or other leader

For God's people throughout the world, and for those who gather in the name of Christ.

For *NN* our catechumen(s) and *NN* their sponsors(s).

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

For all those in danger and need, and for those who hunger and thirst.

For the dying and the dead.

For our city and community, and for all those we love.

Remembering the blessed Virgin Mary, *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

Blessed are you, God of Israel, who made us an everlasting covenant. Receive the prayers we offer this day for us in our weakness and for all peoples everywhere. Glory to you for ever and ever.

Notes

[1] John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968, pp. 243-244.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

[3] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, p. 21.

[4] Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, p. 166.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

[6] Quoted in C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. New York: Harper and Row, 1968, p. 223.

[7] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke: (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1985, p. 1005.

[8] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rc1c0001.txt>

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

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