

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2017

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday before Lent

### Green Proper 1



#### Collect

O God, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

#### 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 English Standard Version (ESV)

##### Proclaiming Christ Crucified

2 <sup>1</sup> And I, when I came to you, brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> did not come proclaiming to you the testimony<sup>[b]</sup> of God with lofty speech or wisdom. <sup>2</sup> For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup> And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, <sup>4</sup> and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men<sup>[c]</sup> but in the power of God.

##### Wisdom from the Spirit

<sup>6</sup> Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. <sup>7</sup> But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup> But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—<sup>10</sup> these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God

except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

[<sup>13</sup> And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. <sup>16</sup> “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.]

**Footnotes:** a. or *brothers and sisters*. b. some manuscripts *mystery* (or *secret*). c. the Greek word *anthropoi* can refer to both men and women. [d. or *interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language, or comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*]

**Comment:** We do not know exactly what lay behind this unusual but rich passage. It bears the undercurrent of a very stressful relationship between Paul and those for whom he wrote. For some reason he felt it necessary to defend his work as an apostle during an earlier visit to Corinth. But he did so with sarcasm about his lack of worldly wisdom, his physical weakness and halting speech. He even admits to being genuinely afraid (verses 3-4).

## **Matthew 5:13-20** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **Salt and Light**

5 <sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. <sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that<sup>[a]</sup> they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

### **Christ Came to Fulfill the Law**

<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore whoever relaxes 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.  
<sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

**Footnotes:** a. or house. <sup>16</sup> *Let your light so shine before others that*

**Comment:** Three brief excerpts from Jesus' teaching – probably given at different times - have become memorable criteria for Christian living: salt that savours, light that can be seen clearly, and the eternal validity of God's commandments. This is still the quality of life for every Christian disciple. For the faithful Jew, Torah was - and is - more than law; it is a way of life in the real world in communion with and obedience to God. Like the prophets before him, Jesus did not seek to destroy Torah. He only sought to enrich and fulfil it in every human life. Matthew's Gospel presented Jesus as the new Moses who would lead Israel out of the rigidity and bondage which had encumbered Torah for centuries. Torah, God's unique gift to Israel, was for the ordinary person, not the exclusive priest, learned scholar or haughty scribe of minute legalisms. Righteousness was indeed the fulfilment of the law, but exclusive self-righteousness was not only unjust but contrary to the inclusive love for every person who sought to be in fellowship with the One who sought to gift the whole world through Israel. It has been said that Jesus wished to be nothing more than a faithful Jew. It was God's will that the man from Nazareth become the saviour of the world by living Torah in all its beauty and fullness.

### **Psalm 112** *Beatus vir* Grail Psalter

**℟̥ The good man is a light in the darkness for the upright.**

<sup>1</sup> Alleluia! Happy the man who fears the Lord,  
who takes delight in all his commands.

<sup>2</sup> His sons will be powerful on earth;  
the children of the upright are blessed. **℟̥**

<sup>3</sup> Riches and wealth are in his house;  
his justice stands firm for ever.

<sup>4</sup> He is a light in the darkness for the upright:  
he is generous, merciful and just. **℟̥**

<sup>5</sup> The good man takes pity and lends,  
he conducts his affairs with honour.

<sup>6</sup> The just man will never waver:  
he will be remembered for ever. **℟̥**

<sup>7</sup> He has no fear of evil news;  
with a firm heart he trusts in the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> With a steadfast heart he will not fear;  
he will see the downfall of his foes.

**℟** **The good man is a light in the darkness for the upright.**

<sup>9</sup> Open-handed, he gives to the poor;  
his justice stands firm for ever.  
His head will be raised in glory. **℟**

<sup>10</sup> The wicked man sees and is angry,  
grinds his teeth and fades away;  
the desire of the wicked leads to doom. **℟**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** This didactic psalm resonates with both the tradition which emerge in exile with emphasis on the just rewards of the righteous and the prophetic tradition of social justice. It comes from the so-called Hebrew Wisdom literature generally thought to have been created during the Persian period of Jewish history 539 – 333 BC using older sources.

### **Post Communion**

Go before us, Lord, in all we do with your most gracious favour, and guide us with your continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name, and finally by your mercy receive everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Blessing**

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary, fill you with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**