

Sunday 18th June 2017

Trinity 1 Proper 6

Green



Collect

O God, the strength of all those who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in the keeping of your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; 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**

Romans 5:1-8. English Standard Version (ESV)

Peace with God Through Faith

5¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we^[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith^[b] into this grace in which we stand, and we^[c] rejoice^[d] in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Footnotes: a. Some manuscripts *let us*. b. Some manuscripts omit *by faith*. c. Or *let us*; also verse 3. d. Or *boast*; also verses 3, 11.

COMMENT: Few passages in the whole of the New Testament have had such influence in the Church since the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. Legend has it, though it has often been repeated as historical fact, that Martin Luther's study of this passage inspired him to post his "Ninety-five Theses Against Indulgences" on the church door of the Wittenburg Castle. Paul stated here as clearly as he ever did, the basis for and the status of our relationship with God. To do so he used a forensic term drawn not from Roman law courts, but from his Hebrew background, and particularly the pre-Christian Jewish translation of the Old

Testament into Greek (The Septuagint or ‘LXX’) which used the word ‘dikaion’ (= to treat rightly or regard as right) and its cognate word ‘dikaiosuné’ (= justice, rightness) to translate the Hebrew concept of how a just God treats the guilty. Paul had already stated the universal sinfulness of all humanity (3:23). How could a just and holy God then relate to humans whose sin totally separated us from divine holiness? Only by grace, by totally undeserved acts of love that remove all barriers to the relationship. That has been the special work of Jesus Christ (i.e. the work of at-one-ment). By his life, death and resurrection he had reconciled us to God. Because of this we now stand in a completely different relationship with God. Our response to this unprecedented initiative by God in Christ is to accept our new relationship in grateful trust and to live a new life in faithful obedience to God, as Jesus himself had done. In the end, we shall also share the glory of God even as Jesus did after his resurrection (verse 2). From this springs all the qualities required for living out our new relationship in this world despite all the suffering it may entail (verse 3): endurance, character, hope (vss.3-4). All this is possible “because in God’s love has been poured into our hearts” through the Holy Spirit as the enabling power for our daily lives (verse 5). In a rhapsody of amazed adoration, Paul then went on to tell how this had all come about. Jesus Christ had died for us ungodly sinners. This above all proves how much God loves us. How many great hymns of faith have been written to repeat and yet failed to surpass the majestic simplicity of Paul’s words, “While we were sinners Christ died for us.”

Matthew 9:35-10:8 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Harvest Is Plentiful, the Labourers Few

9³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few;³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.”

The Twelve Apostles

10¹ And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.² The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;^[a] ⁴ Simon the Zealot,^[b] and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’^[c] ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers,^[d] cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

Footnotes: a. Some manuscripts *Lebbaeus*, or *Lebbaeus called Thaddaeus*. b. Greek *kananaios*, meaning *zealot*. c. Or *The kingdom of heaven has come near*. d. *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13.

COMMENT: This passage might be called “the apostles mandate” because it concentrates on the task to be done and the twelve whom Jesus selected to undertake it. It also includes their initial instructions for beginning their work. Jesus used his Galilean origins to good effect, identifying with the humble villagers among whom he had grown up. As for the urban communities, there were possibly two which might qualify for such a description - Tiberias and Sepphoris. Both were relatively new, and both had been built as the capital city for Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, Sepphoris, just five miles north of Nazareth in the Galilean hills, had held the tetrarch’s establishment since AD 4 CE, but in AD 25 was replaced by Tiberias on the shores of the Sea of Galilee because it gave better access to both regions of the tetrarchy. It was also the hub for local roads and the great trade route from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf via Damascus and the valley of the Tigris-Euphrates River. The population of these urban centres was very mixed - Galileans and foreigners, high and low, Jews and gentiles, slaves and freedmen, and the usual hangers-on at the tetrarch’s court. Jesus preferred ministering among the underclasses. His compassion for the plight of these people stands out in all the gospels. So the tradition reported in verse 36 had deep, personal meaning. It is possible that his words recorded in verse 37 originated in a proverb well known to the same common folk. It is the kind of saying one might hear during the busy harvest season when extra laborers were urgently needed. The naming of the twelve creates a problem for every interpreter. We know extremely little about half of them. That there were twelve seems have correlation with the tradition of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were many more followers, and the tradition in all four Gospels, and in 1 Corinthians 15, is that 12 were selected for special training.

Psalm 116:1,10-17 *Dilexi, quoniam* Grail Psalter

℟ How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me?

Alleluia!

¹ I love the Lord for he has heard
the cry of my appeal;

² for he turned his ear to me
in the day when I called him. ℟

¹⁰ I trusted, even when I said:

“I am sorely afflicted,”

¹¹ and when I said in my alarm:

“No man can be trusted.”

℟ How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me?

¹² How can I repay the Lord
for his goodness to me?

¹³ The cup of salvation I will raise;
I will call on the Lord's name. **℟**

¹⁴ My vows to the Lord I will fulfil
before all his people.

¹⁵ O precious in the eyes of the Lord
is the death of his faithful. **℟**

¹⁶ Your servant, Lord, your servant am I;
you have loosened my bonds.

¹⁷ A thanksgiving sacrifice I make;
I will call on the Lord's name. **℟**

¹⁸ My vows to the Lord I will fulfil
before all his people,

¹⁹ in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem. **℟**

**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 hymn of thanksgiving most likely accompanied a thank-offering sacrifice by an individual on recovery from a serious illness. It would appear to have been designed for ritual use in the temple in the presence of a congregation.

Post Communion

Eternal Father, we thank you for nourishing us with these heavenly gifts: may our communion strengthen us in faith, build us up in hope, and make us grow in love; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love, defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**