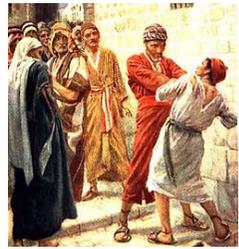


Sunday 17th September 2017

Trinity 14

Battle of Britain Sunday

Proper 19 Green



Collect

Almighty God, whose only Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence: give us pure hearts and steadfast wills to worship you in spirit and in truth; 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**

Exodus 14:19-31 English Standard Version (ESV)

Crossing the Red Sea

14¹⁹ Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them,²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night^[a] without one coming near the other all night.²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.²³ The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.²⁴ And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic,²⁵ clogging^[b] their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen."²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw^[c] the Egyptians into the midst of the sea.²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained.²⁹ But the

people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.³⁰ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.³¹ Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Footnotes: a. Septuagint *and the night passed*. b. or *binding* (compare Samaritan, Septuagint, Syriac); Hebrew *removing*. c. Hebrew *shook off*.

COMMENT: A pillar of cloud by day and fire by night leading the Israelites to the sea through which they passed on dry ground. Various explanations have been given such as volcanic eruptions. Were they travelling along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea where a mighty wind first drove back the sea, then huge waves washed back onshore engulfing the pursuing Egyptians? Those are the most likely natural explanations, but they can never be proved. Other scholars have suggested alternative explanations. The pillar of cloud and fire was regarded as a symbol of the presence and protection of the LORD as the Israelites made their way through the wilderness to the Promised Land. The phrase “the pillar of cloud and fire” is repeated in several other places; Nehemiah 9:12 & 19, and Psalm 99:7. Told from the point of view of a people under constant stress from many external enemies, the story elicits a sense of security and trust. But what of the Egyptians? What of the women whose husbands, sons and brothers rode in those chariots that became clogged with mud and were swept under the returning sea? An ancient Jewish Midrash told of the LORD weeping as the Hebrews celebrated because, “the Egyptians are my children too!” From that point of view, the story contains sadness. Yet the main trust of the story is that the LORD is the saviour of Israel.

Matthew 18:21-35 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.” ²³ “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.” ²⁴ ^[a] When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ ^[b] And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant ^[c] fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, ^[d] and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants

saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,^[e] until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Footnotes: a. Greek *bondservants*; also verses 28,31. b. a *talent* was a monetary unit worth about twenty years’ wages for a labourer. c. Greek *bondservant*; also verses 27,28,29,32,33. d. a *denarius* was a day’s wage for a labourer. e. Greek *torturers*.

COMMENT: What caused Peter to ask this question? We can only ponder. Peter’s question, however, brings forth a marvellously exaggerated response and a parable that teaches true forgiveness: the grace of forgiveness has no limits. The parable of the wicked servant reveals a ruthlessness in God’s judgment that seems uncharacteristic, yet it contains one of Jesus’ most important teachings. It also illustrates the principle of forgiveness verbalized in the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” (Matt. 6:12, 14-15) It shows how freely and fully God forgives, and how much God expects us to forgive others whom we feel may have wronged us. The person who refuses to forgive only does damage to his/her eternal soul as well as interpersonal relationships in this life. One point to note is the vast difference in the two debts. Just the numbers alone quite apart from the coinage emphasises this, a ratio of 100 to 1. Ten thousand talents would have a value of millions of pounds today. A hundred denarii (each worth a day labourer’s wage at that time) would be worth only a relatively few pounds in today’s currency. Such exaggeration (known in literature as ‘hyperbole’) is found in many of Jesus’ parables. He told these little stories in this manner to drive home his point. This sets the Christian way apart in an age when so many persons and groups utter angry denunciations or act violently toward those who differ with them. Is this merely an ideal toward which we should strive? Or could it be the most practical way of settling our differences and living together as neighbours in a world which we now realise is increasingly pluralistic in so many respects?

Psalm 114 *In exitu Israel* Grail Psalter

℟ Alleluia!

¹ Alleluia!

When Israel came forth from Egypt,
Jacob’s sons from an alien people,
² Judah became the Lord’s temple,
Israel became his kingdom. **℟**

³ The sea fled at the sight:
the Jordan turned back on its course,
⁴ the mountains leapt like rams
and the hills like yearling sheep. **℟**

⁵ Why was it, sea, that you fled,
that you turned back, Jordan, on your course?

⁶ Mountains, that you leapt like rams;
hills, like yearling sheep?

R Alleluia!

⁷ Tremble, O earth, before the Lord,
in the presence of the God of Jacob,

⁸ who turns the rock into a pool
and flint into a spring of water. **R**

**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 song, also known as “The Egyptian Hallel”, may have been composed for the celebration of the Passover. Another possible origin may have been for the celebration of God as the Lord of history in an enthronement ceremony at the New Year. It looks back to the great deliverance from Egypt which was the source and strength of Israel’s faith. Exactly when it came into liturgical use is unknown.

Post Communion

Lord God, the source of truth and love, keep us faithful to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, united in prayer and the breaking of bread, and one in joy and simplicity of heart, in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**