

1st October 2017

Trinity 16

Proper 21

Green



Collect

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers of your people who call upon you; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them; 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 17:1-7 English Standard Version

Water from the Rock

17 ¹ All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² Therefore the people quarrelled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” ³ But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” ⁴ So Moses cried to the LORD, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” ⁵ And the LORD said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the name of the place Massah^[a] and Meribah,^[b] because of the

quarrelling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

Footnotes: a Exodus 17:7 *Massah* means *testing*. b Exodus 17:7 *Meribah* means *quarrelling*.

COMMENT: This is another incident in the long story of Israel’s continuing struggle to believe and follow God’s leading during their wandering in the wilderness. Maps show that though surrounded by sea with relatively narrow links to the land masses of Africa and Asia, the Sinai Peninsula is actually an extension of the deserts of Egypt and Arabia. The climate is torrid and dry. Fresh water is extremely scarce. The Bedouin tribes who have made it there traditional home for millennia spend their lives in search for water and pastures for their meagre flocks of sheep and goats. The narrative of the Exodus continues with an incident drawing upon these realities. The role of any tribal leader in such circumstances was to provide his people with sustaining supplies of water. Moses came into conflict with the Israelites because they had found no adequate sources of water on their journey. They wanted to return to Egypt where water had been plentiful. Moses comes into conflict with the Israelites because they have no water and want to return to Egypt where water was plentiful. Following God’s instructions, Moses makes water flow by striking a rock. The point of the story is that faithful living is obedience to God, not finding plentiful resources.

Matthew 21:23-32 English Standard Version

The Authority of Jesus Challenged

21²³ And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”²⁴ Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things.²⁵ The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’²⁶ But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸ “What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

COMMENT: Challenged by his opponents to identify his authority as he was teaching in the temple, Jesus refused. He further challenged them with a simple but obvious riddle about John the Baptist. When they refused, he excoriated them for not believing John the Baptist when even tax collectors and prostitutes did so. The excerpt ends with a parable unique to Matthew’s Gospel. Various Greek texts give different versions of the story, some reversing the roles of the two brothers. The message of the story is clear: God requires righteous conduct, not hypocritical behaviour. The final thrust that the tax collectors and prostitutes may have an advantage over the religious authorities can be seen as a justification for Jesus’ ministry to those whom the authorities totally rejected. It meant that the irreligious may sometimes respond to the good news of God’s forgiving love more readily than those whose self-deceiving moral superiority makes them impervious to its appeal. The main key is the person’s sense of self-worth which can deceive even the most perceptive to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think (Romans 12:3).

Psalm 78:1-4,12-16 *Attendite, popule* Grail Psalter.

℟ Never forget the deeds of the Lord.

¹ Give heed, my people, to my teaching;
turn your ear to the words of my mouth.

² I will open my mouth in a parable
and reveal hidden lessons of the past. **℟**

³ The things we have heard and understood,
the things our fathers have told us,
⁴ these we will not hide from their children
but will tell them to the next generation:

℟ Never forget the deeds of the Lord.

the glories of the Lord and his might
and the marvellous deeds he has done, **℟**

¹² He did wonders in the sight of their fathers,
in Egypt, in the plains of Zoan. **℟**

¹³ He divided the sea and led them through
and made the waters stand up like a wall.

¹⁴ By day he led them with a cloud,
by night, with a light of fire. **℟**

¹⁵ He split the rocks in the desert.

He gave them plentiful drink as from the deep.

¹⁶ He made streams flow out from the rock
and made waters run down like rivers. **℟**

**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: The whole psalm celebrates God's goodness to the Israelites. In this segment the psalmist recounts some of the mighty acts of God during the Exodus and early years in the deserts of Sinai.

Post Communion

Almighty God, you have taught us through your Son that love is the fulfilling of the law: grant that we may love you with our whole heart and our neighbours as ourselves; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Blessing.

Christ the Son of God perfect in you the image of his glory and gladden your hearts with the good news of his kingdom; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**