

Sunday 17th June 2018

Trinity 3

Proper 6 Green



Collect

Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; 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**

2 Corinthians 5:6-10 [11-16] 17 English Standard Version (ESV)

5 ⁶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

[¹¹ Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. ¹² We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. ¹³ For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.]

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. ¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. ^[a] The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Footnotes:

a. Or *creature*

COMMENT: In this excerpt Paul confidently celebrated faith in the love of Christ that had motivated and sustained him through years of difficult ministry to the Gentiles. He fervently proclaimed that anyone who believed and followed Christ had become a new creation. This gave him a whole new perspective on life in this world and life eternal from living in the Spirit. Paul had a very troubled relationship with the Corinthians, but he constantly strove to bring them to a new life of faith. The early part of this passage (verses 6-10) deals with the subject of our unavoidable mortality which he had begun to discuss in the previous chapter, 4:7 – 5:5. Facing death was nothing new for him. Many times he had been threatened with imminent demise, yet he had never been afraid of it. He firmly believed in resurrection and life beyond death. This faith gave him the confidence to say what for any other person might be regarded as death wish (verse 8). His one desire was to serve Christ as long as he had breath, knowing full well that judgment awaited him as it did for every other human being. Beyond that too lay the glorious experience of the eternal presence of God and Jesus Christ.

Mark 4:26-34 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Parable of the Seed Growing

4²⁶ And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

³⁰ And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

COMMENT: Because we do not think in spiritual terms, Jesus’ parables of the kingdom of heaven often seem to defy interpretation for modern readers. In these two brief vignettes drawn from the rural life of Galilee, Jesus spoke about the way faith can provide those who believed in and followed him a full and abundant life. **Seedtime and harvest** would have been natural topics of conversation then, as life depended upon the harvest. In that region, especially in the Plain of Esdraelon nearby, there was abundant good soil for raising abundant grain crops. Because of the mountains of Lebanon to the north, rainfall was plentiful. Even though he was a carpenter, he might well have turned his own hand to the sickle to aid his

neighbours at harvest time. This set of parables reflects that rural scene with sharp realism. The time between seedtime and harvest also come through almost as clearly in the words of vs. 27. It takes approximately ninety days for the farmer to sleep and rise before a field crop can ripen to maturity. Much can happen in the interim to prevent a fruitful harvest. That requires both faith and patience from the farmer.

Mustard ... the smallest seed ? the biggest tree ? Mustard seed is about 1 – 2 mm in diameter. It was cultivated for the oil of its very small seeds. It is botanically not the smallest seed, but in Jesus' culture, mustard seed is the smallest among the plants familiar to them. In fact, it is often used to describe something small during the time. Mustard is an annual shrub, a small tree that is able to grow up to 8 feet in height (or much higher in the wild), which is the tallest among other herbs in a Jewish garden.

Psalm 20

✠ It is the Lord who will give Victory

¹ *For the Choirmaster. A Psalm of David*

² May the Lord answer in time of trial;
may the name of Jacob's God protect you. ✠

³ May he send you help from his shrine
and give you support from Zion.

⁴ May he remember all your offerings
and receive your sacrifice with favour. ✠

⁵ May he give you your heart's desire
and fulfill every one of your plans.

⁶ May we ring out our joy at your victory
and rejoice in the name of our God.
(May the Lord grant all your prayers.) ✠

⁷ I am sure now that the Lord
will give victory to his anointed,
will reply from his holy heaven
with the mighty victory of his hand. ✠

⁸ Some trust in chariots or horses,
but we in the name of the Lord.

⁹ They will collapse and fall,
but we shall hold and stand firm. ✠

¹⁰ Give victory to the king, O Lord,
give answer on the day we call. ✠

**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: Like a number of psalms, this one offers prayers for an anointed king. It pleads for God's help at a time when the monarch is menaced by foes from within and without his country. It is never wrong to pray for our Queen, government and our country. On the other hand, we should beware of blatant nationalism which ignores morality - such as Hitler's Germany. This prayer for a king probably dates from the period prior to the Babylonian exile (586-539 BC) when Judea, the southern part of the original kingdom, still had a ruling monarch. The performance of religious rites seeking God's favour comes through the early verses. A sense of trepidation lies behind the latter verses. As God's anointed, the monarch's safety and victory were of paramount importance to the nation and its security. Whoever the enemy was, they were presumed to have more powerful armaments (verse 7-8). Therefore, the appeal for God's help in gaining victory was far from assured. Offering prayers for victory in battle may be as old as human religious traditions. How we think God is to deal with the fervent prayers for victory offered by both combatants is a theological puzzle that no one can satisfactorily solve, probably because it is rooted in the foibles of the human condition.

Post Communion

O God, whose beauty is beyond our imagining and whose power we cannot comprehend: show us your glory as far as we can grasp it, and shield us from knowing more than we can bear until we may look upon you without fear; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ, who has nourished us with himself the living bread, make you one in praise and love, and raise you up at the last day; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**