

Sunday 22nd January 2017

Epiphany 3

White



Collect

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; 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 1:10-18 English Standard Version (ESV)

Divisions in the Church

1¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers,^[a] by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. ¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Christ the Wisdom and Power of God

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Footnote: a. or *brothers and sisters*. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*; also verse 11.

COMMENT: Factional differences had created serious tensions within the Corinthian congregation. Peter, Paul and Apollos had all visited and taught among them. Each faction favored one apostle's teaching over that of another. From the rest of Paul's correspondence with these sorely divided converts, we can conclude that his relationship with at least some of the Corinthians had been particularly distressing. The general scholarly consensus is that the two Corinthian letters as they now stand contain excerpts from several shorter letters written in the early AD 50s. Discussions about the order for these excerpts can be discovered from several scholarly works. It would appear that an earlier letter had preceded this reading which deals in part with his founding visit which lasted about 18 months, probably in Ad 50-51. In making his appeal for unity Paul sought to focus the Corinthians attention on the essentials of the gospel: the meaning of death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To him nothing else

mattered although some may have believed, as many still do, that this was just "foolishness." To Paul it was the means God used for the salvation of the world. Baptism also plays an important role in Paul's appeal to the Corinthians. It was not as important to him, however, as it had been to some of them. He protested against the apparent distinction some had drawn between baptisms conducted by the different apostles. Accordingly, he emphasized that his task was not to baptize, although he had done some, but to proclaim the gospel. This raises some questions: If Paul did not commonly baptize those who responded to his preaching, as he said, did that rite not yet have the conclusive significance it later acquired? Did Peter baptize as a result of repentance, following John the Baptist's example, more frequently as Acts 2:38 would indicate? Were Paul's infrequent baptisms and those conducted by Apollos, defective as Acts 18:24-19:7 leads us to believe, the real issue behind this conflict in Corinth? What exactly did Paul mean by "baptism in the name of Paul" (vs.13) which he so pointedly rejected in favour of "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 19:5)? It is difficult not to conclude that for Paul baptism had both a cleansing and a participatory action. It had the effect, spiritually and symbolically, of cleansing the believers from the sin that so easily clings to all humans by enabling them to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11). Henceforth, the baptized were "saints" in the sense that although they could still fall from grace and still commit sin, they also possessed the Spirit enabling repentance to repair such transgressions and guaranteeing full deliverance in the future. Because he believed in the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ, above all else, Paul could no more baptize in his own name than claim to be the Messiah himself.

Matthew 4:12-23 English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus Begins His Ministry

¹² Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.

¹³ And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." ¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."^[a] ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Great Crowds

²³ And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Footnotes: a. The Greek word *anthropoi* refers here to both men and women.

COMMENT: The calling of the first of his disciples, four ordinary fishermen of Galilee, was the beginning of this fulfilment the creation of a community of those who would believe in and follow him. His healing ministry was also a sign that the reign of God had already begun.

Psalm 27 *Dominus illuminatio*

℟ It is your face, O Lord, that I seek.

¹ The Lord is my light and my help;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
before whom shall I shrink? **℟**

² When evil-doers draw near
to devour my flesh,
it is they, my enemies and foes,
who stumble and fall. **℟**

³ Though an army encamp against me
my heart would not fear.
Though war break out against me
even then would I trust. **℟**

⁴ There is one thing I ask of the Lord,
for this I long,
to live in the house of the Lord,
all the days of my life,
to savor the sweetness of the Lord,
to behold his temple. **℟**

⁵ For there he keeps me safe in his tent
in the day of evil.
He hides me in the shelter of his tent,
on a rock he sets me safe. **℟**

⁶ And now my head shall be raised
above my foes who surround me
and I shall offer within his tent
a sacrifice of joy.
I will sing and make music for the Lord. **℟**

⁷ O Lord, hear my voice when I call;
have mercy and answer.

⁸ Of you my heart has spoken:
“Seek his face.” **℟**

It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
⁹ hide not your face.

Dismiss not your servant in anger;
you have been my help.

℟ It is your face, O Lord, that I seek.

Do not abandon or forsake me,
O God my help!

¹⁰ Though father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will receive me. **℟**

¹¹ Instruct me, Lord, in your way;
on an even path lead me.

¹² When they lie in ambush protect me
from my enemy's greed.

False witnesses rise against me,
breathing out fury. **℟**

¹³ I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.

¹⁴ Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.
Hope in the Lord! **℟**

**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 very personal prayer expresses trust in God in the face of hostile opponents. The psalmist seeks access to the temple where he may meet God as if face to face.

Short Preface

And now we give you thanks because, in the incarnation of the Word, a new light has dawned upon the world, that all the nations may be brought out of darkness to see the radiance of your glory.

Post Communion

Almighty Father, whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world: may your people, illumined by your word and sacraments, shine with the radiance of his glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

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.**