

Sunday 10th February 2013

Sunday next before Lent

Quinquagesima

Green



Collect

Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Exodus 24:12-18 English Standard Version (ESV)

¹²The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” ¹³So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. ¹⁴And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them.” ¹⁵Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. ¹⁸Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

COMMENT: There is an intentional similarity between our Old Testament and New Testament lessons today. Almost certainly, the Gospel author used this Exodus passage as the basis for his narrative of the Transfiguration. This is actually the ending of an extensive definition of the covenant God made with Israel (chapters 19-24 inclusive). Moses is bid come up the sacred mountain to receive the stones on which the terms of the covenant (the Ten Commandments)

were written. There Moses meets God in a cloud and stays forty days and nights. Forty is a sacred number which appears many other times in the Old and New Testaments.

Matthew 17:1-9 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Transfiguration

17 ¹ And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son,^[a] with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. ⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.”

Footnote: a. or my Son, my (or the) Beloved.

COMMENT: Does any other story of Jesus’ ministry greater contain more mystery than this? Was it a vision revealing to the disciples Jesus’ true nature and his future glory after death? Or was this an interpretation of what the ministry of Jesus meant to the church founded by the apostles? The cloud and the voice symbolized not only the close presence of God, but God’s designation of Jesus as Messiah first stated in his baptism. The appearance of Moses and Elijah, as well as Peter’s desire to build three tabernacles, indicated that this renewed revelation at this crucial moment in Jesus’ ministry still maintained the vital connection with the law and the prophets of Israel. It also reflected the early apostolic church’s unbreakable continuity with the spiritual tradition of Israel.

℟ I will give you the nations for your heritage.

¹ Why this tumult among nations,
among peoples this useless murmuring?

² They arise, the kings of the earth,
princes plot against the Lord and his Anointed.

³ “Come, let us break their fetters,
come, let us cast off their yoke.” ℟

⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord is laughing them to scorn.

⁵ Then he will speak in his anger,
his rage will strike them with terror.

⁶ “It is I who have set up my king
on Zion, my holy mountain.” ℟

⁷ (I will announce the decree of the Lord:)

The Lord said to me: “You are my Son.

It is I who have begotten you this day.

⁸ Ask and I shall bequeath you the nations,
put the ends of the earth in your possession.

⁹ With a rod of iron you will break them,
shatter them like a potter’s jar.” ℟

¹⁰ Now, O kings, understand,
take warning, rulers of the earth;

¹¹ serve the Lord with awe
and trembling, pay him your homage

¹² lest he be angry and you perish;
for suddenly his anger will blaze.

Blessed are they who put their trust in God. ℟

**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: Here we have a distinctly Messianic Psalm. Such Psalms were treated as prophecy in the New Testament times and in the early Church pointing to Jesus as Messiah. The Kingdom of God is to be founded and maintained by an anointed King who is the Son of God and his vicar on earth. The poet speaks as if the ideal King had already ascended His throne, or that this is a coronation psalm. More conservative commentators have put the Psalm back as far as David's time or on to that of Alexander Jannæus, a bloodthirsty prince of Maccabean race who died in 78 BC. The Psalm envisions Israel's King as ruling over other kingdoms. This would still fit a messianic theme as Christ is seen as the King of the whole earth. The Psalm is frequently quoted in the New Testament (Acts 4:25; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5; Revelation 2:27; Revelation 19:15).

Post Communion

Holy God, we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ: may we who are partakers at his table reflect his life in word and deed, that all the world may know his power to change and save. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary, fill you with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**