

27<sup>th</sup> August 2017

## Trinity 11

Proper 16

Green



### Collect

O God, you declare your almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity: mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace, that we, running the way of your commandments, may receive your gracious promises, and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure; 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 1:8-2:10** English Standard Version (ESV)

### Pharaoh Oppresses Israel

<sup>1</sup> <sup>8</sup> Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. <sup>9</sup> And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. <sup>10</sup> Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” <sup>11</sup> Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. <sup>12</sup> But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. <sup>13</sup> So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves <sup>14</sup> and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. <sup>15</sup> Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, <sup>16</sup> “When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.” <sup>17</sup> But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. <sup>18</sup> So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this, and let the male children live?” <sup>19</sup> The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.” <sup>20</sup> So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. <sup>21</sup> And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. <sup>22</sup> Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every son that is born to the Hebrews<sup>[a]</sup> you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.”

## The Birth of Moses

2<sup>1</sup> Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman.  
2 The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months.<sup>3</sup> When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes<sup>[b]</sup> and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank.<sup>4</sup> And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him.<sup>5</sup> Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it.<sup>6</sup> When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.”<sup>7</sup> Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?”<sup>8</sup> And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go.” So the girl went and called the child’s mother.<sup>9</sup> And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him.<sup>10</sup> When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, “Because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.”<sup>[c]</sup>

**Footnotes:** a. Samaritan, Septuagint, Targum; Hebrew lacks *to the Hebrews*.  
b. Hebrew *papyrus reeds*. c. *Moses* sounds like the Hebrew for *draw out*.

**COMMENT:** Paul’s theology, preaching and letter writing all had one goal: to bring his audience to an understanding of faith in its Christian form and to commit themselves to a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ. He proclaimed primarily, if not exclusively, an ethical gospel and theology made possible by the living Christ. It was good news for ethical living. Nowhere in all of the letters attributed to Paul does this come to the fore more explicitly than in this passage. In many respects this form of exhortation has become a standard preaching method ever since. A preacher sets forth the truth of the gospel and then exhorts the congregation in ways to carry it into daily living.

## Matthew 16:13-20 English Standard Version (ESV)

### Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

16<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”<sup>14</sup> And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”<sup>15</sup> He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”<sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.<sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock<sup>[a]</sup> I will build my church, and the gates of hell<sup>[b]</sup> shall not prevail against it.<sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed<sup>[c]</sup> in heaven.”<sup>20</sup> Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

**Footnotes:** a. The Greek words for *Peter* and *rock* sound similar b. Greek *the gates of Hades*. c. *or shall have been bound... shall have been loosed*

**COMMENT:** Many issues surface in this reading. Not the least of these is the primacy of Peter and the claim to the papacy by the bishop of Rome. Another is the nature of the authority given by Christ in this passage to the apostles and through them to the clergy and laity of the church. Perhaps of greater significance, however, is Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. Caesarea Philippi lay in the foothills of Mount Lebanon, some 2000 feet above sea level. It is called today the Golan Heights, disputed territory since its occupation by Israel in 1967. It was of one of three sources of the Jordan River which fed its waters about 25 turbulent miles southward into the Sea of Galilee – actually a large, fresh water lake – some 700 feet below sea level. Jesus would have been well aware of all this. Did he lead his disciples to this site because he wanted them to recognise him in a setting totally different from the familiar shores of the Sea of Galilee? Did he want them to see him as the Messiah of the whole world, not just of the Jews? The response of the disciples to his penetrating questions cast the importance of the event into sharp relief. At first they linked him with Israel's prophetic history. Undoubtedly the general populace saw him as one of the prophets, as did they. The Hebrew tradition held that Elijah would return to announce the coming of the Messiah. John the Baptist fitted that role and had suffered death by execution at the order of Herod Antipas, half-brother of Philip. Yet it was Peter's declaration that made all the difference in Matthew's narrative of how the disciples perceived Jesus. There are echoes of Psalm 2:7 and Matthew's baptismal and temptation narratives (Matt. 3:17; 4:3) in this confession. In some respects, this is also the climax of Matthew's Gospel. Everything that had gone before had served to present Jesus as the Messiah, or "God's anointed." The title had also been used in reference to Israel's Davidic monarchs. The remainder of the Gospel pointed out how different a Messiah Jesus was compared to traditional Jewish expectations. The designation "son of God" is found to limited extent in the Old Testament and more commonly in the extra-biblical Wisdom literature. In the New Testament it had almost exclusively a Christological connotation connected with belief in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. Those events served to describe metaphorically Jesus' unique relationship to God. This passage verbalized that relationship in as few words as possible. It was, as Jesus declared in response to Peter, a revelation. It still is for us.

## Psalm 124

**℟ Our help is in the name of the Lord.**

<sup>1</sup> *A Song of Ascents. Of David.*

"If the Lord had not been on our side,"  
this is Israel's song.

<sup>2</sup> "If the Lord had not been on our side  
when men rose up against us,

<sup>3</sup> then would they have swallowed us alive  
when their anger was kindled. **℟**

<sup>4</sup> Then would the waters have engulfed us,  
the torrent gone over us;

<sup>5</sup> over our head would have swept  
the raging waters." **℟**

<sup>6</sup> Blessed be the Lord who did not give us  
a prey to their teeth!

<sup>7</sup> Our life, like a bird, has escaped  
from the snare of the fowler.

**✠ Our help is in the name of the Lord.**

Indeed the snare has been broken  
and we have escaped.

<sup>8</sup> Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth. **✠**

**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:** Psalms 120-134 had a special place in the liturgies of the Second Temple during the Persian and Hellenistic periods of Israel's history (ca. 538-165 BCE). Scholars designate this collection of fifteen psalms "the Songs of Ascents," a title they also bore in the Hebrew Scriptures. They appear to have existed as a separate collection before the Psalter was assembled in its present form. They may have been used by pilgrims approaching the temple at one or other of the great festivals. This psalm refers to some unknown historical event when Israel was delivered from enemy attack. That deliverance received is seen through the eyes of faith. The Lord was "on their side" as verses 1-2 boldly assert. The threat had been real, like that of a raging torrent still so common in the valleys of the Judean wilderness after a heavy rain (verses 3-5). The deliverance had been like an animal escaping from the very teeth of a predator (verse 6), or a bird escaping from a fowler's snare (verse 7). This latter form of hunting was an important source of food, especially among the peasant people who lived on the edge of deprivation or starvation – for game to escape in this manner often meant the difference between eating and hunger. Such homely scenes from village life found similar use as parables and metaphors in Jesus' teaching. The psalmist saw events through the eyes of a believer and with the mind of one who had an intimate relationship with God in prayer. Thus the psalm could begin with marvel and surprise, and end with praise to God who had created a new situation in which faith could respond. The songs of Israel viewed history as the arena in which God performed His mighty acts of salvation.

### **Post Communion**

Lord of all mercy, we your faithful people have celebrated that one true sacrifice which takes away our sins and brings pardon and peace: by our communion keep us firm on the foundation of the gospel and preserve us from all sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Blessing**

The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**