

Sunday 10th September 2017

Trinity 13

Proper 18 Green



Where two or three are gathered together

Collect

Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Exodus 12:1-14 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Passover

12¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ²“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.^[a] ⁷“Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. ¹⁰And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods

of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. ¹⁴ “This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.

Footnotes: a. Hebrew *between the two evenings*.

COMMENT: Just as Christians mark the beginning of Redemption by the (alleged) year of our Lord’s birth – the Israelites would mark their annual calendar beginning with the Passover. Originally the months were not marked by names but by Ordinals – and would be quoted as the 3rd month since we gained our freedom – every month would commemorate Israel’s freedom. The later practice of naming the months owes itself to the period of exile, and influenced by the Babylonian calendar. The fact that the month is not named in this text suggests that it is much older than the exilic or post exilic period, and is indeed a tradition maintained by the community of faith as to the redemption of Israel by God. As the lamb was sacrificed for sacred purposes it all must be consumed, either by eating or the remnants destroyed by fire (v.10) – there is an echo of this in the Christian Eucharist, where all the elements consecrated must be consumed. Perhaps the most valuable lesson drawn from this account, is that Israel was to live the faith – this event was (and is still today) to be commemorated every year.

Matthew 18:15-20 English Standard Version (ESV)

If Your Brother Sins Against You

18 ¹⁵ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^[a] in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Footnote: a. or *shall have been bound... shall have been loosed*.

COMMENT: How do Christians settle their conflicts? As Jesus prepares his followers to be the people of God - those who are called - the ecclesia - the Church, he instructs them on how to provide discipline with the Church community. Acts 5:1-11 (Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, who lied about their giving to God, and when challenged, died suddenly) is a stark example of the discipline in the early Church. Paul, the great founder of mixed congregations in Gentile cities, also wrote of the principle of excommunication (veres 17-18 cf. 1 Cor. 5:3-5, 9-13; 2 Cor. 13:1-3). One may wonder at the severity of the event in Acts 5 but the event pressed upon those early Christians the seriousness of their mission - the failure of which would have robbed us all of the continuing witness of God's love and the Church would have been stillborn.

The comment of Jesus about his presence will have called to mind Exodus 20:24 "*In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you*". It is this text whereby the creation of Synagogues (The 'gathered' or 'assembly'), following the destruction of the Temple, and the exile for the Jewish Leaders - were justified - the Synagogue was a means of the continued worship of God - even in exile. Wherever Christians are to be found, there is the Church - the worship of God will continue with the guiding presence of the Lord. The text uses the word 'gathered' - which in Greek is 'σύναγωγή' - synago' the root word of synagogue!

Psalm 119:33-40 V (He) *Legem pone mihi,*

℟ Lead me, Lord in the path of your commands.

³³ Teach me the demands of your precepts
and I will keep them to the end.

³⁴ Train me to observe your law,
to keep it with my heart. ℟

³⁵ Guide me in the path of your commands;
for there is my delight.

³⁶ Bend my heart to your will
and not to love of gain. ℟

³⁷ Keep my eyes from what is false;
by your word, give me life.

³⁸ Keep the promise you have made
to the servant who fears you. ℟

³⁹ Keep me from the scorn I dread,
for your decrees are good.

⁴⁰ See, I long for your precepts;
then in your justice, give me life.

℟ Lead me, Lord in the path of your commands.

**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: In this fifth segment of the acrostic psalm based on the letters in the Hebrew alphabet, each new couplet begins with the Hebrew letter HE, (pronounced “hay”) fifth in the sequence. Just being obedient to all God’s covenant law is its own reward for the true Israelite. This brief segment of the long meditation on Torah uses several synonyms for the law: statutes, commandments, testimonies, precepts. All of these correspond to what the great prophets regarded as “the word of the Lord.” Throughout the psalm the poet’s favourite words were “precept” and “ways.” These words also appeared quite prominently in the Pentateuch narratives, of which the crowning event was the giving of the Covenant Law at Sinai. A long poem with such artificial structure may seem repetitive. To the psalmist, the law is nothing less than the truth from God, the rule of life and the ground of hope. The Law - given by God reveals his character, and in keeping the Law an Israelite framed himself to the character of God - and this psalm is a hymn in praise to that Law.

Post Communion

God our creator, you feed your children with the true manna, the living bread from heaven: let this holy food sustain us through our earthly pilgrimage until we come to that place where hunger and thirst are no more; 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.**