

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2018

## Trinity 7

Proper 10 Green



### Collect

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of your great mercy keep us in the same; 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**

### Ephesians 1:3-14 English Standard Version (ESV)

#### Spiritual Blessings in Christ

1<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,<sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love<sup>5</sup> he predestined us<sup>[a]</sup> for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,<sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,<sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight<sup>9</sup> making known<sup>[b]</sup> to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ<sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.<sup>11</sup> In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,<sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.<sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,<sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee<sup>[c]</sup> of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,<sup>[d]</sup> to the praise of his glory.

**Footnotes:** a. Or *before him in love, having predestined us*. b. Or *he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known...* c. Or *down payment*. d. Or *until God redeems his possession*.

**COMMENT:** This opening passage, has all the marks of a Jewish berakah. Such a prayer of blessing formed a significant part of the Jewish liturgical tradition in which Paul would have frequently participated. This prayer blessed the LORD for two special divine acts which caused Israel to wonder and worship: creation and deliverance. The Psalms include numerous examples. For example, Psalm 111 contains both of these themes. So also does the opening passage of this “letter.” Jesus Christ is the central figure of this poetic blessing, as he was for all of Paul’s teaching. It lifts up Christ’s pre-existence, his role in God’s plan of salvation from the beginning, his continuing

presence, and the believer's response to all this through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Few if any passages in the Pauline corpus reach the heights of poetic grandeur as do the words of this opening prayer. Not only have those who believe received redemption through Christ's blood and the forgiveness of all trespasses (vs. 8). We also have wisdom and insight into the mystery which Christ reveals (vs. 9). This is the vision of the eschaton (the last things) in which all history will be brought to a conclusion in Christ (v. 10). That too is our inheritance and destiny in Christ (v. 11) to the end that we may "live for the praise of his glory" (v. 12). The gift of the Holy Spirit is the divine pledge we have that all this is true (verses 13 & 14). Everything that follows in the remainder of the letter depends on this opening liturgy. After this initial awe at what God has done in Christ comes its essential meaning for all who believe. Two lively metaphors referring to the Holy Spirit stand out in verses 13 and 14. The "seal of the promised Holy Spirit" has to do with the mark of ownership placed on shipments of goods to prove that it came from a specific owner and had been delivered intact. We still use such means to designate the safe transmission of valuable goods. Thus the Holy Spirit seals us as belonging to God. The "pledge of our inheritance" (Greek = arrabon) also came from the Hellenist business world. It represented an advance payment which formed part of the purchase price as a guarantee that the remainder would be paid in due time. Paul uses the word here to say that the gift of the Holy Spirit now is God's guarantee of future blessedness in eternal fellowship with God. It is the promise that someday we shall enter into a full relationship with God. If we need to know what that will be like, we need only look at how the gospels describe Jesus living from day to day and after his death by crucifixion was raised and, in the words of Acts 1:9, ascended to be with God.

## **Mark 6:14-29** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **The Death of John the Baptist**

6<sup>14</sup> King Herod heard of it, for Jesus'<sup>[a]</sup> name had become known. Some<sup>[b]</sup> said, "John the Baptist<sup>[c]</sup> has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him."<sup>15</sup> But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old."<sup>16</sup> But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."<sup>17</sup> For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her.<sup>18</sup> For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."<sup>19</sup> And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not,<sup>20</sup> for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.<sup>21</sup> But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.<sup>22</sup> For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you."<sup>23</sup> And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom."<sup>24</sup> And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist."<sup>25</sup> And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist

on a platter.”<sup>26</sup> And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her.<sup>27</sup> And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s<sup>[d]</sup> head. He went and beheaded him in the prison<sup>28</sup> and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.<sup>29</sup> When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

**Footnotes:** a. Greek *his* b. Some manuscripts *He*. c. Greek *baptizer*; also verse 24. d. Greek *his*.

**COMMENT:** The execution of John the Baptist was only one of many acts of extreme violence attributed to Herod Antipas, the Roman’s puppet- king of Galilee and Petrea. Herodias obviously had a grudge against John, but the outcome of the story is not surprising considering the danger John’s movement of repentance had for the profligate Antipas. The story played such a large part in Mark’s narrative because it reflected the puppet king’s guilt and his fear that Jesus and his disciples would start a rebellion once again threatening his shaky hold on power. The idea was popular among the common folk of the time that Jesus was John raised from the dead, and John in turn was Elijah returned from the dead. In fact, this was one of the answers the disciples gave to Jesus when he asked “Who do people say that I am?” (8:27 & 28). It is probable that John’s movement was absorbed into the post-Easter church and that Mark consistently portrayed John as Elijah resurrected. By linking the suffering of Elijah, the execution of John and the crucifixion of Jesus, Mark points out that John’s suffering is not meaningless, any more than is that of the Christians in Rome. Mark thus attempted to encourage his Roman audience at a time of severe persecution without drawing unnecessary attention from the Roman authorities. As a prelude to the passion narrative, the story of John’s imprisonment and execution set before the church the identification that they were serving God in his chosen plan for them. Are we serving God’s plan for us - reading the scriptures reflection and prayer can aid us on our way.

## **Psalm 24** *Domini est terra* Grail Psalter

**℟ The Lord’s is the earth and its fullness.**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord’s is the earth and its fullness,  
the world and all its peoples.

<sup>2</sup> It is he who set it on the seas;  
on the waters he made it firm. ℟

<sup>3</sup> Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?  
Who shall stand in his holy place?

<sup>4</sup> The man with clean hands and pure heart,  
who desires not worthless things,  
(who have not sworn so as to deceive their neighbour.) ℟

<sup>5</sup> He shall receive blessings from the Lord  
and reward from the God who saves him .

<sup>6</sup> Such are the men who seek him,  
seek the face of the God of Jacob. ℟

<sup>7</sup> O gates, lift high your heads;  
grow higher, ancient doors.  
Let him enter, the king of glory!

**✠ The Lord's is the earth and its fullness.**

<sup>8</sup> Who is the king of glory?  
The Lord, the mighty, the valiant,  
the Lord, the valiant in war. ✠

<sup>9</sup> O gates, lift high your heads;  
grow higher, ancient doors.  
Let him enter, the king of glory! ✠

<sup>10</sup> Who is he, the king of glory?  
He, the Lord of armies,  
he is the king of glory. ✠

**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 psalm celebrates two crucial elements of Israel's religious tradition: the whole creation as the possession of the LORD alone and the temple as the visible symbol of God's presence within creation. Although attributed to David in the superscription, it comes from a much later date as evidenced by the references to the temple (verse 3). Solomon, not David, was the king who built the temple in Jerusalem. It would appear that the psalm had liturgical origin and was sung in a procession on some festival occasion. Late Jewish sources regard it as a hymn for the New Year festival when the LORD's work of creation was commemorated and the sovereignty of the LORD over all creation celebrated. There is also a strong element of holiness in verse 3-6. Ritual purity had special meaning for entrance into the temple because the sacred precincts were regarded as the place where the LORD dwelt. The antiphonal song of verses 7-9 again emphasizes the entrance of The LORD into the holy place. The gates of the temple are personified and responsive to the approaching worshipers represented by the holy people of the LORD. Yet the identification of the LORD and the people of Israel is not altogether complete. Hence the question, "Who is the King of glory?" The poetic image used in answering this question (verse 8) is that of a victorious monarch leading his triumphant army home. One commentator suggested that this may have been the point in the procession where the ark or some other symbol of divine presence moved into the temple.

### **Post Communion**

Lord God, whose Son is the true vine and the source of life, ever giving himself that the world may live: may we so receive within ourselves the power of his death and passion that, in his saving cup, we may share his glory and be made perfect in his love; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

### **Blessing**

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**