

Sunday 22nd July 2018

Trinity 8

Proper 11 **Green**



Collect

Almighty Lord and everlasting God, we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern both our hearts and bodies in the ways of your laws and the works of your commandments; that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Ephesians 2:11-22 English Standard Version

One in Christ

2 ¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,^[a] but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^[b] the Spirit.

Footnotes: a. or sojourners. b. or in.

COMMENT: Originally this letter, bore no title and no address. In the earliest and best attested manuscripts of the text, 1:1 is not included. The letter simply begins: “Paul ... to all who are saints and faithful in Jesus Christ.” It is also evident from 1:15 and 3:2 that he is not familiar with the recipients of the letter, but knows of them from others who reported their faith experience to him. They too seem unfamiliar with him. Yet Paul spent three years in Ephesus. It is inconceivable that such a formal document as this could be understood as being addressed to people whom he knew and who undoubtedly knew him so well. The best solution to “the Ephesian problem” is that the letter came from the hand of a disciple of Paul who was intimately acquainted with him and his teaching, especially as expressed in the Letter to the Colossians. Ephesians and Colossians have a close association, possibly through

Tychicus who is named in both in almost identical words (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7). The unknown author used Paul's name to communicate the gospel of reconciliation in Christ to a Gentile audience in a style and a language that was not essentially Pauline. The letter is a reminder to primarily Gentile churches reminding them the destiny of all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, and all of creation, to be brought together under the sovereignty of Christ. The church as the Body of Christ, has been created for this mission in and to the world. The letter strove to create a sense of unity among the several classes of converts in the early church. Gentiles and Jews are most prominent in this attempt to reconcile very significant differences. The crucial element is their common faith in what Jesus' sacrifice on the cross did in giving everyone access to God. Verses 11-12 state the inherent separation of Gentiles from God due to their "uncircumcision." This represents a typical Jewish view of all who did not bear the symbol of belonging to Israel's sacred covenant. Because of that exclusion, moreover, they were "at that time without Christ." Under the Old Covenant, only Jews could inherit the promised blessedness of the messianic commonwealth. With the vivid metaphor of verse 20, the author reiterates that while the doors of faith are wide open to everyone, the building to which we are moving in faith from many directions has Jesus Christ as its cornerstone. Perhaps even more dramatically, in verse 15, the author declares that Christ "has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself a new humanity." That goes much further than and directly contradicts the tradition repeatedly affirmed in Matthew 5:17-48. Could Paul the former Pharisee have said such a thing? Does it not also conflict with Paul's anguish for his fellow Jews expressed in Romans 9-11? This is also a clue to the fact that Paul was not the author, and points to a later time than Paul's day, where Christianity is no longer considered an extension of Judaism but is a separate faith community.

Mark 6:30-34 English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

6³⁰ The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.³¹ And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.³² And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.³⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore.⁵⁴ And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him⁵⁵ and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was.⁵⁶ And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

COMMENT: No matter where Jesus and his disciples went, they could not escape the multitudes that ran after them. That gave Jesus more opportunities to teach the people and be compassionate toward those in need. The passage describes exactly what Peter told Cornelius, the Roman centurion, in Acts 10:38, that Jesus went about doing good. Mark uses these brief summaries to demonstrate what Peter also said, "because God was with him." This further

confirms the “Spirit possession” theme Mark introduced in the baptism passage (1:10) and has illustrated with the numerous miracles and healing stories up to this point. This would appear to be a conclusion to that theme sequence. However, since 7:1 begins a new section of the narrative emphasizing the developing opposition to Jesus leading toward the cross. In the first part of this reading (verses 30-34), Jesus’ compassion for his disciples comes to the fore. We would say that he took them away for a time of debriefing. Their time alone was short, as verse 33 points out. As soon as they were recognised, the crowds gathered from every direction. As the text between the two parts of this reading tells us, the multitude eventually reached 5,000 in number (verse 44). That is quite a flock of sheep for the shepherd to be concerned about (verse 34). Mark had two purposes in mind as he related his narrative: to answer the question, “Who is Jesus?” and to define what it meant to be one of Jesus’ disciples. He was telling the story, perhaps as he had heard Peter tell it over and over again in brief anecdotes. If Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis (ca. AD 150) was right in attributing Mark with using Peter as his primary source, they lived in dangerous times. It was during or just after the Neronian persecution and the great fire of Rome which Nero blamed on the Christians. It may also have coincided with the Roman-Jewish War (AD 66-70). Mark wanted his narrative to encourage the congregation in Rome for whom he was writing. Not only were they suffering greatly, so were many of their Roman neighbours who struggled to survive after being burned out of house and home. Discipleship for that group of Christians, Mark was saying, means doing as Jesus himself had done in having such open and generous compassion on the peasant folk of Galilee. The implications for the church’s life today are obvious. We can never escape the bonds of compassion inspired by the Spirit who presents us with the opportunity to be Christ-like in caring for the poor.

Psalm 89: 20-37 *Inveni David, servum meum* Grail Psalter

℟ I have found David my Servant.

²¹ I have found David my servant
and with my holy oil anointed him.

²² My hand shall always be with him
and my arm shall make him strong. ℟

²³ The enemy shall never outwit him
nor the evil ones oppress him.

²⁴ I will beat down his foes before him
and smite those who hate him. ℟

²⁵ My truth and my love shall be with him;
by my name his might shall be exalted.

²⁶ I will stretch out his hand to the Sea
and his right hand as far as the River. ℟

²⁷ He will say to me: ‘You are my father,
my God, the rock who saves me.’

²⁸ And I will make him my first-born,
the highest of the kings of the earth. ℟

²⁹ I will keep my love for him always;
with him my covenant shall last.

³⁰ I will establish his dynasty for ever,
make his throne endure as the heavens. ℟

³¹ If his sons forsake my law
and refuse to walk as I decree
³² and if ever they violate my statutes,
refusing to keep my commands;

℟ I have found David my Servant.

³³ then I will punish their offenses with the rod,
then I will scourge them on account of their guilt.

³⁴ But I will never take back my love,
my truth will never fail. **℟**

³⁵ I will never violate my covenant
nor go back on the word I have spoken.

³⁶ Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness.

‘I will never lie to David.

³⁷ His dynasty shall last for ever.

In my sight his throne is like the sun;

³⁸ like the moon, it shall endure for ever,
a faithful witness in the skies.’ **℟**

**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 praise for David was written in the first person as if God was speaking. It dates from a later time after the elite of Israel had been taken into exile in Babylon (586 BC). The hero-stories of David then served both a religious and political purpose in retaining a meaningful national identity after that disaster. It reads more like a prophetic oracle than a hymn. As in the passage from 2 Samuel 7 above, the role of the monarch, nationalism and religious tradition intermingle in this passage. Developing Judaic and Christian traditions both read messianic concepts into this psalm. Christian piety found in it proofs that the church became the New Israel. It is more expressive, however, of the covenant theology of Israel derived from the prophetic era and institutionalized in the centralised temple and its liturgies of the late monarchical and early post-exilic periods.

Post Communion

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have taken holy things; may the ears which have heard your word be deaf to clamour and dispute; may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit; may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope; and may the bodies which have been fed with your body be refreshed with the fullness of your life; glory to you 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.**