

Sunday 23rd September 2018

Trinity 17

Proper 20 **Green**



Collect

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; 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**

Proverbs 31:10-31 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Woman Who Feels the LORD

31 ¹⁰ [a] An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. ¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. ¹² She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. ¹³ She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. ¹⁴ She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar. ¹⁵ She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens. ¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. ¹⁷ She dresses herself^[b] with strength and makes her arms strong. ¹⁸ She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. ¹⁹ She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. ²⁰ She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. ²¹ She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.^[c] ²² She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. ²³ Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land. ²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant. ²⁵ Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. ²⁶ She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. ²⁷ She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. ²⁸ Her children rise

up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ²⁹ “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” ³⁰ Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. ³¹ Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

Footnotes: a. verses 10-13 are an acrostic poem, each verse beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. b. Hebrew *She girds her loins*. c. or *in double thickness*.

COMMENT: The supremely efficient homemaker receives the praise of her husband and children. The poem was written in acrostic form in which the first letter of each verse follows the order of the Hebrew alphabet. Although not evident in the English translation, this had two advantages for Hebrew students: the style indicated that the teacher was dealing seriously with the subject; and it aided memorization. The description of this woman’s activities outside her home depicts her as one who plays a significant role in the economic world (verses 16, 18 and 24). Her tasks mainly related to normal household duties such as weaving (verse 19) and the making of fine clothes for her family and for sale (verses 19, 21, 22 and 24), but in verse 16, it shows her engaged in a property transaction in order to plant a vineyard. This normally would have been her husband’s responsibility, but may be a device to show how respected, and important in the community she is. It would be a mistake to assume women were subservient within the culture of the Old Testament. One example to counter this is Deborah, Judge of Israel (Judges 4:4). This reading is often used as part of a tribute a devout Christian woman’s funeral. It ranks with the passage from the Deuterocanon; Ecclesiasticus 44: “Let us now praise famous men and our fathers who begat them.”

Mark 9:30-37 English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus Again Foretells Death, Resurrection

3 ³⁰ They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, ³¹ for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” ³² But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

Who Is the Greatest?

³³ And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was

the greatest. ³⁵ And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶ And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

COMMENT: Bound for Jerusalem, Jesus continued teaching his disciples that the cross would be his inevitable end. Now that they knew he was the Messiah, however, they had another agenda. Which of them were to have prominence in the Messiah’s kingdom? It took a child set in their midst to show them what serving with really meant. To be with him in his divinely appointed glory involved humiliation like his. Naturally they failed to understand it. Do we even now? If that is what is involved, who really wants the cross of discipleship? The principle of it all seems so out of touch with our age with its motifs of selfishness and success.

Psalm 1 *Beatus vir qui non abiit* Grail Psalter

℟ Happy the man who has placed his trust in the Lord.

¹ Happy indeed is the man
who follows not the counsel of the wicked,
nor lingers in the way of sinners
nor sits in the company of scorners,
² but whose delight is the law of the Lord
and who ponders his law day and night. **℟**

³ He is like a tree that is planted
beside the flowing waters,
that yields its fruit in due season
and whose leaves shall never fade;
and all that he does shall prosper.

⁴ Not so are the wicked, not so! **℟**

For they like winnowed chaff
shall be driven away by the wind.

⁵ When the wicked are judged they shall not stand,
nor find room among those who are just;

⁶ for the Lord guards the way of the just
but the way of the wicked leads to doom. **℟**

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: This psalm forms the introduction to the whole Psalter. It sets forth the theme to the Psalter as “a book for the pious.” Its Hebrew vocabulary as well as its theme comes from a time when zeal for the study of the law was paramount in Israel. This would indicate the period of Ezra, (5th–4th Centuries BC) to whose influence it shows some indebtedness. However, it could be as late as the time when wisdom and the law were equated in the late Greek period about the end of the 3rd century BC. The “blessed” (Heb. = ‘esher’) of the opening line conveys more than happiness, but a sense of being right with God and with the world. The image of a tree by a stream and thus well watered would have been a powerful one in the dry climate of Israel. The contrasting image of the wicked who is “like chaff which the wind drives away” only reinforces its effectiveness. In verse 5 yet another image depicts the eschatological day of judgment when the LORD will separate the righteous from the wicked. A similar image occurs frequently in the Old Testament prophets and in New Testament in the parables of judgment (cf. Matthew 25). This is a significant element in the Christian as well as the Jewish tradition. As one commentator put it, the psalm speaks to all ages in saying that we all “must reckon with the Lord, who is ever mindful of our ways ...”

Post Communion

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep *your* hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**