

Sunday 26th May 2019
Sixth Sunday of Easter
Rogation Sunday

White



Collect

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; 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**

Acts 16:9-15 English Standard Version (ESV)

16⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”¹⁰ And when Paul^[a] had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

The Conversion of Lydia

¹¹ So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis,¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the^[b] district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

Footnotes: a. Greek *he*. b. or *that*

COMMENT: This is one of the important transitions in the story Luke is telling in Acts. It is the beginning of what scholars call a series of eyewitness accounts in which the pronouns switch from “they” to “we.” It is accepted by Scholars that the “we” passages came from the author of the two volumes,

the Gospel of Luke and Acts attributed to Luke. Of all the congregations with which Paul was associated, he had warmest feelings for the Philippians, as his letter to that community showed. Yet unlike his visits to the Jewish Diaspora in Galatia, he did not find a synagogue in Philippi. Was there no Jewish community in that important Roman city? Or were they too few in number, since only ten male Jews were required to form a synagogue? Lydia appears to have been a Gentile “worshipper of God” (verse 14) in whose home Paul made his headquarters? The Greek word thus translated, *sebomenos* (Eng. = devout), appears several times elsewhere in Acts along with *phoboumenos* (English = God-fearing) describing Gentiles who demonstrated sincere spiritual concerns. (see. 10:2; 13:43, 50; 17:4, 17; 18:7). It is also possible that “a certain woman named Lydia” actually means “a woman from Lydia,” an ancient kingdom which under Rome became part of the province of Asia in which the prosperous city of Thyatira was located. It also appears that she was a business woman or a widow who had taken over her former husband’s trade, as identified by being “a seller of purple.” Purple was the most valuable of ancient dyes, the source of which was a mollusk, each shade created by using different species of mollusk. The Hebrews valued the colour highly as a symbol of distinction, wealth and royalty. However we hypothesize about such minutiae, one thing is certain: in this instance, Paul’s testimony in Philippi marks the beginning of the Christian mission in Europe of which we too are the heirs.

John 14:23-29 English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

14²³ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.²⁸ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.²⁹ And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.

COMMENT: In this reading, John deals with the issue of the church living in a hostile world without the visible presence of Christ. He tells his community through these words of Jesus that obedience and love are the

conditions ruling the life of the church and therefore guaranteeing the sense of Christ's living presence as God's representative. He then goes on to make an additional promise that the Holy Spirit will teach them and bring to their remembrance all that Christ said to them. We could ask the question, is that in part, the purpose of John's Gospel and that of the other three Gospels – a testimony to what Jesus did and said? Also does he also refer to what John Calvin (the Swiss Reformer 1509-1564) many centuries later would describe as “the inner testimony of the Spirit” enabling us to interpret Holy Scripture? The final parting words of Jesus have brought peace and security to countless distressed Christians. John obviously regarded the trials his community might be facing as similar to that which Jesus himself faced the night he was betrayed. The closer he came to the cross, the greater was Jesus' sense that his ultimate of security lay in loving obedience to God's will. This did not in any way remove him from the consequences of what others like Judas, Caiaphas or Pilate would do. Loving God and others in such critical situations was the ultimate act of faith. For the disciples, for John's community and for us, this is still so, as verse 29 assures us.

Psalm 67 *Deus misereatur* Grail Psalter

℟️ Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

¹ *For the Choirmaster. With stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.*

² O God, be gracious and bless us
and let your face shed its light upon us. [*Selah*]

³ So will your ways be known upon earth
and all nations learn your saving help. ℟️

⁴ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you. ℟️

⁵ Let the nations be glad and exult
for you rule the world with justice.
With fairness you rule the peoples,
you guide the nations on earth [*Selah*]. ℟️

⁶ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you. ℟️

⁷ The earth has yielded its fruit
for God, our God, has blessed us.

⁸ May God still give us his blessing
till the ends of the earth revere him. ℟️

**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 simple hymn of praise may well have been a thanksgiving prayer after a successful harvest had brought relief from a severe famine. (verse 6) It most likely found an appropriate place in the feast of Tabernacles (Succoth) prominently observed after the Exile. As a time for singing and dancing, this festival featured many liturgical compositions which may also have included such Psalms as 113-119 and 136. The untranslatable word, *Selah*, which occurs twice in the text, may have indicated a place for cymbals to sound. The superscription indicates that stringed instruments were also used as accompaniment. Human voices in chorus, however, made the main music of worship in the temple. The psalm would have been sung antiphonally. Another notable quality of this psalm is its missionary character drawn from such sources as Deutero-Isaiah [Isaiah Chapters 40–55] and Jonah. God’s goodness to Israel, so visible in the abundant harvest, should be a revelation to all the world of God’s righteous ways in dealing with those who trust God. Accordingly, all nations should join Israel in reverence and praise.

Short Preface

But chiefly are we bound to praise you because you raised him gloriously from the dead. For he is the true paschal lamb who was offered for us, and has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has restored to us everlasting life.

Post Communion

God our Father, whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life: may we thirst for you, the spring of life and source of goodness, through him who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

Blessing

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**