

Sunday 23rd June 2019

Trinity 1

Green Proper 7



Collect

O God, the strength of all those who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in the keeping of your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; 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**

Galatians 3:23-29 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Law and the Promise

3²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave^[a] nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Footnotes: a. Greek *bondservant*.

COMMENT: One of Paul's most decisive statements declares that faith in Jesus Christ has removed all barriers to a relationship with God for all who believe. He claims that the law given to Moses was like a schoolteacher disciplining us until Jesus came to make us all God's children and heirs with Christ. Now, we are all children of Abraham and heirs of all God's promises to Israel.

Verse 28 is often misused as if there is no difference between male and female. Many versions mistranslate the third couplet as '*there is neither male nor female*' – in the ESV, it is correctly translated. A Greek could become a Jew, and vice versa, a free person could become a slave and vice versa. Despite present day legal fiction and cosmetic surgery, a man cannot become a woman and vice versa. Creation provides a distinction between men and women. Genesis 1:27; "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*" Even in the Genesis text, male and female are one in the image of God, and yet are precisely that; 'male **and** female'. Paul's text echoes that of the Genesis passage. However, the verse is shoehorned into providing justification for Women's Ordination and even same gender marriage as if that verse overwrites creation theology with gender not being a determinate in Christian and human

relationships. It then follows that it matters not the gender of the Minister, it matters not the gender of a marriage partner! Yet the equality espoused by Paul in Galatians 3 is an equality of being one in Christ and heirs of Abraham, via faith and Baptism (verses 28 & 29). Much the same message is found in contemporary letters by Paul; see 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, and Romans 10:11-13. Also an Epistle written some 40 years later in discussing Christian relationships also stresses the oneness and equality in Christ for various groupings – See Colossians 3:11.

Luke 8:26-39 English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus Heals a Man with a Demon

8²⁶ Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes,^[a] which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus^[b] had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.” ²⁹ For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) ³⁰ Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. ³¹ And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. ³² Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. ³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ³⁶ And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed^[c] man had been healed. ³⁷ Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

Footnotes: a. Some manuscripts *Gadarenes*; others *Gergesenes*; also verse 37. b. Greek *he*; also verses 38, 42. c. Greek *daimonizomai*; elsewhere rendered *oppressed by demons*.

COMMENT: Jesus has entered a region that had some Jews living there but was primarily a Gentile area. The fact that this was a Gentile region is further evidenced by the herd of swine. Jews saw pigs as an unclean animal according to the law of Moses and neither ate, handled, or kept such animals in their midst. The story of the Gerasene demoniac is thoroughly shaped by Jewish norms. This becomes apparent in the description of Gerasa as opposite Galilee. It is the place of demons and uncleanness. It

is a place where pigs need to rush down the hill and be drowned in the sea. Almost immediately Jesus was met by a demon-possessed man that was living like an animal among the tombs of the death. In the Jewish mind this would have made him unclean on almost every level possible as even stepping on a tomb made one unclean (between demons, tombs, and pigs, you would have a difficult time inventing a more unclean scene for a Jew than this one). Many are confused about why the demons would ask to be sent into a herd of pigs and why Jesus would possibly grant such a request. Pigs were the classic symbol of unclean animals and unclean animals were an Old Testament symbol of sin. So Jesus sent the ultimate in evil forces into the ultimate symbol of sin. He then showed his authority over both as the herd of pigs immediately ran into the Sea of Galilee (Lake Gennesaret) and died. The unclean spirits were engaged in destruction. At its core, this is a scene of resurrection and new life for this young man. He had been completely dehumanized and was truly among the dead, cut off from society in every way and separated from God. He is, in many respects, a picture of our own selves dead in sin and separated from God. But after encountering Jesus, we see him as the perfect picture of restoration. As an aside, “sitting at the feet” (verse 35 – see Luke 10:35) is not necessarily a term of discipleship (and is not here) but a well understood act of deference.

Psalm 96 *Cantate Domino* Grail Psalter

℟ Proclaim the wonders of the Lord among all the peoples.

1 O sing a new song to the Lord,
sing to the Lord all the earth.

2 O sing to the Lord, bless his name. ℟

Proclaim his help day by day,
³ tell among the nations his glory
and his wonders among all the peoples. ℟

⁴ The Lord is great and worthy of praise,
to be feared above all gods;

⁵ the gods of the heathens are naught. ℟

It was the Lord who made the heavens,
⁶ his are majesty and state and power
and splendour in his holy place. ℟

⁷ Give the Lord, you families of peoples,
give the Lord glory and power;

⁸ give the Lord the glory of his name. ℟

Bring an offering and enter his courts,
⁹ worship the Lord in his temple.

O earth, tremble before him. ℟

¹⁰ Proclaim to the nations: “God is king.”

The world he made firm in its place;
he will judge the peoples in fairness. ℟

¹¹ Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad,
let the sea and all within it thunder praise,
¹² let the land and all it bears rejoice,
all the trees of the wood shout for joy

✠ Proclaim the wonders of the Lord among all the peoples.

¹³ at the presence of the Lord for he comes,
he comes to rule the earth.

With justice he will rule the world,
he will judge the peoples with his truth. ✠

**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: There is a haunting spiritual beauty about this psalm. Imagine a troop of pilgrims making their way up to Jerusalem. At the end of a long journey they come at last in sight of the city nestled at the foot of Mount Zion with its magnificent temple atop nearby Mount Moriah. Someone in the group suddenly breaks into a new song, perhaps no more than a chanted glossalalia. They have arrived at their destination after a perilous journey through much hostile territory where ambush was an imminent threat. Now the LORD's sanctuary lay before them in all its glory. What else could they do but ascribe the glory due to the LORD's name and bring their offering to his courts? (verse 8) Then bowing in the LORD's presence, they worshipped in holy splendour (verse 9 – KJV: "the beauty of holiness"). So what was "holy splendour?" Was it the genuine beauty of the sight which still impresses the religious tourist on first seeing the city holy to three living traditions? Was it the moral beauty of a righteous person wholly committed to the LORD's covenant law? Was it the majesty of all creation which was clearly recognised as the LORD's handiwork? Despite the rapacious devastation of rampant urbanism and religious conflict, the rugged wilderness beauty of Jerusalem's environs still makes one catch one's breath.

Post Communion

Eternal Father, we thank you for nourishing us with these heavenly gifts: may our communion strengthen us in faith, build us up in hope, and make us grow in love; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love, defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**