

Sunday 18th August 2019

Trinity 9

Proper 15

Green



Collect

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; 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**

Jeremiah 23:23-29 English Standard Version (ESV)

Lying Prophets

23 ²³“Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? ²⁴Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD. ²⁵I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ ²⁶How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, ²⁷who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? ²⁸Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. ²⁹Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

COMMENT: It remains a mystery why the Lectionary compilers have terminated the reading at verse 29 rather than at the natural end of the oracle and chapter (verse 40) or at the end of a paragraph (verse 32). The whole passage conveys Jeremiah’s to fierce condemnation on behalf of the LORD against the many false prophets of his time. The burden of Jeremiah’s message is that these false prophets have completely misunderstood who the LORD really is. The LORD is not some neighbourhood deity who reigns over a small hilltop sanctuary or one sends propitious dreams promising good

favour. Instead, the word of the LORD to the true prophet is as different as wheat from straw (verse 28c). The dreams of the false prophets lead people astray, providing no benefit for them.

Luke 12:49-56 English Standard Version (ESV)

Not Peace, but Division

12⁴⁹ “I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! ⁵¹ Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. ⁵² For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Interpreting the Time

⁵⁴ He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘A shower is coming.’ And so it happens. ⁵⁵ And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens. ⁵⁶ You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”

COMMENT: This apocalyptic vision of conflict about what Jesus means presents us with a picture of what may have actually happened in the community for which Luke was writing his gospel in the second last decade of the 1st century. Confronted by Jews who had expelled all Christians from their synagogues and threatened with persecution by the Romans, it would have been natural for them to seek a deeper understanding of what was happening to them in the Jewish traditions about the end of time and the teachings of Jesus himself. The quotation about the divided family comes from Micah 7:6, and such a quotation would have reinforced the message to his Jewish hearers, especially those trained in the Scriptures. Certainly the fall of Jerusalem, would have dislocated all of life, and could be described in apocalyptic terms. A turmoil many in the world could identify with today – especially in the middle east.

Psalm 80 *Qui regis Israel* Grail Psalter

℟ **God of hosts bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.**

¹ *For the Choirmaster. Intoned like "Lilies of Testimony." Of Asaph. A Psalm.*

² O shepherd of Israel, hear us,
you who lead Joseph's flock,
shine forth from your cherubim throne
³ upon Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh.
O Lord, rouse up your might,
O Lord, come to our help. **℟**

⁹ You brought a vine out of Egypt;
to plant it you drove out the nations.
¹⁰ Before it you cleared the ground;
it took root and spread through the land. **℟**

¹¹ The mountains were covered with its shadow,
the cedars of God with its boughs.

¹² It stretched out its branches to the sea,
to the Great River it stretched out its shoots. **℟**

¹³ Then why have you broken down its walls?
It is plucked by all who pass by.

¹⁴ It is ravaged by the boar of the forest,
devoured by the beasts of the field. **℟**

¹⁵ God of hosts, turn again, we implore,
look down from heaven and see.
Visit this vine ¹⁶ and protect it,
the vine your right hand has planted.

¹⁷ Men have burnt it with fire and destroyed it.
May they perish at the frown of your face. **℟**

¹⁸ May your hand be on the man you have chosen,
the man you have given your strength.

¹⁹ And we shall never forsake you again;
give us life that we may call upon your name. **℟**

²⁰ God of hosts, bring us back;
let your face shine on us and we shall be saved. **℟**

**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 lament offers a prayer for deliverance using similar imagery from Israel's vineyards. The metaphor occurs in prophetic oracles other than that of Isaiah and in the Gospels as well. (See Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 17:1-10; Hosea 10:1; Matthew 21:33-42; John 15:1-8) Here it is used as a synonym for the Israelites in general. Or, if the tribal names of verses 1-2 are considered in addition to such geographical features as the cedars and "the River," probably the Euphrates (verses 10-11), the Northern Kingdom in particular is intended. Verses 12-13 constitute a reality check. The walls have been broken down and wild animals now feed in the vineyard. The threat of invaders was by no means imagined. After Solomon's death, the Northern Kingdom never enjoyed much security. The specific period referred to from the 10th to the 8th Centuries BC cannot be identified, but could well be close to the Assyrian invasion and destruction of Samaria in 721 BC. Verse 18 personifies the nation as a human being. Some older bible versions, including the KJV and the RSV, retain the phrase "the son of man" for the repeat of man (as a poetic device) which some regard as a messianic (predicting the Messiah) interpretation and which may not have been intended by the psalmist. Even though a prophetic interpretation may not have been in the mind of the author, one might argue that it was the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that led to the crafting of the words to be so understood! The lament ends as usual with a vow in verse 19; "Never... again!" is a phrase often used by religious devotees when repenting their transgressions. Its sincerity has to be measured by the behavioural change that follows, not the beauty or sanctity of the prayer.

Post Communion

Holy Father, who gathered us here around the table of your Son to share this meal with the whole household of God: in that new world where you reveal the fullness of your peace, gather people of every race and language to share in the eternal banquet of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Blessing

The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**