

Sunday 25th August 2019

Trinity 10

Green Proper 16



Collect

Let your merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of your humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please you; 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**

Isaiah 58:9-14 English Standard Version (ESV)

If you do right

58⁹ You shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, ¹⁰if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. ¹¹And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. ¹²And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in. ¹³“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure^[a] on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honourable; if you honour it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure,^[b] or talking idly;^[c] ¹⁴then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;^[d] I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Footnotes: a. or *business*. b. or *pursuing your own business*. c. Hebrew or *speaking a word*. d. or *of the land*.

COMMENT: Not all the poetry of Isaiah 40-66 can be attributed to the unnamed prophet (known as Deutero-Isaiah) of the Exile. Those poems in chapters 56-66 may actually be from a later period, sometimes called Trito-Isaiah, or Third Isaiah. They modelled their poems after his style. This is

one of four strophes of a poem that extends through the whole of chapter 58 dealing with the kind service that pleased the LORD. The prophet sought to inspire the exiles returning from Babylon to a deeper faithfulness to the covenant tradition. While dating the poem may have its difficulties, at least one commentator believes that it stands somewhere between the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah and Zechariah. Verses 11-12 give fairly clear clues that reflect the actual circumstances in Jerusalem and Judah when the exiles returned home. No prophet stands alone and this is particularly noticeable in this poem. Verses 9-10 show the definitive influence of the earlier prophets of social justice. Echoes of the Deuteronomic Code in admonitions about keeping the Sabbath also resound through verse 13. Verse 14 wraps the whole poem in the traditional promise made long before to Jacob that the land of Palestine would belong his descendants. This scripture, inspired the national dream of the Zionist movement in the late 19th Century. It also motivated the Balfour Declaration of 1917 adopted by the British government in 1917: "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." In 1948, the United Nations created the modern state of Israel base on this declaration. In the more than half century since, the struggle between Israelis and Palestinians has had its roots in this biblical promise and its political implications.

Luke 13:10-17 English Standard Version (ESV)

A Woman with a Disabling Spirit

13 ¹⁰ Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." ¹³ And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ¹⁴ But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵ Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" ¹⁷ As

he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

COMMENT: The old issue of how to mark the Sabbath surfaces once again in this passage. Again as he often does, Luke places a woman at the centre of the story. The healing of the woman crippled for eighteen years caused yet another confrontation between Jesus and the religious authorities. In this case the leader of the synagogue, a layman, challenged Jesus indignantly. Was his a genuine religious concern rooted in the Torah or was he just protecting his ground and attempting to buffer anticipated criticism he would face from his more orthodox fellow Jews? Jesus lashed out in condemnation of such hypocrisy. He drew a parallel between the compassion he had just shown for the woman and the perfectly normal care the man would give his beasts of burden, Sabbath day or not. One senses the bitter sarcasm in Jesus' voice, designed to silence the man's protest and show him up as a fool in front of the assembled community, his dominant male peers in particular. The cutting edge of Jesus' rebuke put him to shame. Gathered around the three, the whole crowd rejoiced. One can almost hear them clapping with glee. Point, set and match to Jesus of Nazareth. The woman left triumphantly to celebrate her new freedom from pain and disability with a coterie of her friends. How do we decide what to do on our Christian Sabbath day – the Lord's day or Sunday? Isn't the best way to determine whether our plans are caring and compassionate; or selfishly focused?

Psalm 103 *Benedic, anima mea* Grail Psalter

℟ The Lord is compassion and love.

¹ My soul, give thanks to the Lord
all my being, bless his holy name.

² My soul, give thanks to the Lord
and never forget all his blessings. ℟

³ It is he who forgives all your guilt,
who heals every one of your ills,

⁴ who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with love and compassion,

⁵ who fills your life with good things,
renewing your youth like an eagle's. ℟

⁶ The Lord does deeds of justice,
gives judgment for all who are oppressed.

⁷ He made known his ways to Moses
and his deeds to Israel's sons. ℟

⁸ The Lord is compassion and love,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.

⁹ His wrath will come to an end;
he will not be angry for ever.

¹⁰ He does not treat us according to our sins
nor repay us according to our faults.

✠The Lord is compassion and love.

¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth
so strong is his love for those who fear him.

¹² As far as the east is from the west
so far does he remove our sins. ✠

¹³ As a father has compassion on his sons,
the Lord has pity on those who fear him;

¹⁴ for he knows of what we are made,
he remembers that we are dust. ✠

**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: In words that have comforted countless generations, the psalmist celebrates divine mercy and grace extended to all who pay God due reverence. Extending mercy and forgiveness and thereby bringing reconciliation can be a very powerful tool in any distressed human relationship. The psalmist's point of view holds that this only reflects what God constantly does for us in pardoning our sin and graciously forgiving our failures. Unlike human relations, however, where we often forgive in a calculating way, God forgives because it is God's nature to do so. It is characteristic of the steadfast and constant love God has toward us individually and to the whole of humanity.

Post Communion

God of our pilgrimage, you have willed that the gate of mercy should stand open for those who trust in you: look upon us with your favour that we who follow the path of your will may never wander from the way of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **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.**