

Sunday 8th September 2019

Trinity 12

Green Proper 18



Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray and to give more than either we desire or deserve: pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of 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**

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Choice of Life and Death

¹⁵ “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God^[a] that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules,^[b] then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Footnotes: a. Septuagint; Hebrew lacks *If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God.* b. or *his just decrees*

COMMENT: We have here the Deuteronomic formula (of obedience to the Law) that became the theme for so much of the final edit of the Old Testament documents in the centuries following the return of the

exiles from Babylon in 639 BC. This was especially true of the Books of Joshua and Judges, many Psalms and the Books of Chronicles. God's covenant with Israel required absolute obedience to the Torah as defined by the commandments given to Moses at Mount Sinai. Life, prosperity and the inheritance of the Promised Land depended on this obedience.

Luke 14:25-33 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Cost of Discipleship

14²⁵ Now great crowds accompanied Jesus, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

COMMENT: A parallel reading also appears in Matthew 10:37-39. These are most likely to be the actual words spoken by Jesus. The parables too have an authentic ring to them as the kind of homely examples Jesus would have given to help his audience remember what he had said. Was Jesus just being cautious and giving fair warning to those wishing to follow him as he approached the crucial event of his ministry? Verse 25 notes that “large crowds were travelling with him.” The moment was at hand for everyone to decide whether to go with him to Jerusalem or remain relatively secure in Galilee. John 7:66-71 records another element of this same tradition. Even without omniscience that John attributes to him, Jesus certainly would have known of the dangers that lay ahead. The parables reveal that he was making mental and spiritual preparations for any eventuality. He wanted his disciples – not necessarily the twelve alone – to be

similarly prepared. Crucifixion was designed to maintain public order by creating a paralyzing fear in the general populace. Apparently Pilate used it liberally. We may thus conclude that Jesus would have been fully aware of the possibility should he fall into the hands of the Roman authorities. It was the measure of his concern for those who had rallied to his cause that they too are made fully aware of the dangers they would face if their enthusiasm and loyalty carried them further in his company. Hence the ominous note of unfinished business in both the parables.

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-17 *Domine, probasti* Grail Psalter

℟ Lead me, O Lord, in the path of life eternal.

¹ O Lord, you search me and you know me,
² you know my resting and my rising,
you discern my purpose from afar.
³ You mark when I walk or lie down,
all my ways lie open to you. **℟**

⁴ Before ever a word is on my tongue
you know it, O Lord, through and through.
⁵ Behind and before you besiege me,
your hand ever laid upon me.
⁶ Too wonderful for me this knowledge,
too high, beyond my reach. **℟**

¹³ For it was you who created my being,
knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴ I thank you for the wonder of my being,
for the wonders of all your creation. **℟**

Already you knew my soul
¹⁵ my body held no secret from you
when I was being fashioned in secret
and moulded in the depths of the earth. **℟**

¹⁶ Your eyes saw all my actions,
they were all of them written in your book;
every one of my days was decreed
before one of them came into being. **℟**

¹⁷ To me, how mysterious your thoughts,
the sum of them not to be numbered!

¹⁸ If I count them, they are more than the sand;
to finish, I must be eternal, like you.

℟ Lead me, O Lord, in the path of life eternal.

**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 is not only one of the great treasures of the Psalter but of all devotional literature in every religious tradition. Though it resonates with such theological concepts as the omniscience and omnipresence of God, it is essentially a prayer of intense personal devotion “in a stillness in which the soul and God are alone.”

Post Communion

God of all mercy, in this Eucharist you have set aside our sins and given us your healing: grant that we who are made whole in Christ may bring that healing to this broken world, in the name of 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.**