

Sunday 15th September 2019

Trinity 13

Proper 19

Green



Collect

Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Exodus 32:1-14 English Standard Version

The Golden Calf

32 ⁷And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. ⁸They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” ⁹And the LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.” ¹¹But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, “O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹²Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. ¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” ¹⁴And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

COMMENT: The verses chosen as the lection begin halfway through the story, which speaks for itself. The LORD describes the people as “your people” (verse 7) much in the same way as one spouse may speak of a naughty child as being the other spouse’s child. Yet Moses in reply he addresses them as the LORD’s people (verse 11). ‘Stiff-necked’ is a Hebrew idiom close to the meaning of the English word ‘headstrong’. God hints at the outset of verse 10, there is room to implore God, and intercede on the people’s behalf. “therefore let me alone” – almost “give me permission”. The Prophets frequently play this intercessory role (1 Samuel 12:23; Jeremiah 18:20; Ezekiel 22:30-31; Psalm 106:23). This view cuts against the strict Protestant view, that no other man can mediate between a person and God, but it also places a great responsibility on all Christians to become intercessors on behalf of others – in prayer we can make a difference!

Luke 15:1-10 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

15 ¹ Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” ³ So he told them this parable: ⁴ “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸ “Or what woman, having ten silver coins,^[a] if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Footnotes: a. Greek *ten drachmas*; a *drachma* was a Greek coin approximately equal in value to a Roman *denarius*, worth about a day’s wage for a labourer.

COMMENT: These two impressionistic stories from the daily life of a Palestinian peasant are often overlooked because of their proximity to the much more familiar parable that follows. They tell the story of God’s love for the lost and God’s wholly undeserved grace that offers full and free forgiveness. Note that both parables emphasise the joyful celebration when the lost article is found. The allusion is to God’s joy over a sinner who repents. To God, everyone is important – and loved with an indiscriminate

love. No one is excluded. This crucially significant truth speaks to our time when doubt and disbelief often overwhelm faith and guilt causes some to separate from the Christian community. In each of these two parables, we have profound theology spoken with great simplicity. Was one sheep so valuable? To a poor shepherd, a single lamb would have been precious. His whole livelihood depended on maximizing the number of lambs his herd produced and brought to marketable size. Is it any wonder that the incident sprang into Jesus' mind as he sought to show how much God loves even the most foolish and undeserving of sinners? As for the woman who had lost a coin, could she not be Jesus' own mother, Mary, whose anxiety and joy he recalled so vividly? How often had he come into their humble home from his carpenter shop to find Mary happily celebrating with her closest friends over a refreshing cup of diluted vinegar-wine, a popular beverage among the poor. They made it by pouring water over the skins and stalks left over from the crushing of grapes for wine, then allowing it to ferment. A single coin among ten would have been of great value to the struggling family, perhaps now left fatherless by the death of Joseph as legend tells it. In his *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography*, Bruce Chilton infers that Jesus did not have very happy relationships with his family after Joseph died. Even a mamzer (an outcast because his birth had been suspicious), would have retained such memories of home as he wandered far and wide during his "hidden" years. As a wandering Rabbi, however, he knew that memories such as these would connect directly with his audience who presumably were peasant folk too for the most part.

Psalm 14 *Dixit insipiens* Grail Psalter

R God made all men prisoners of disobedience, that he might show mercy to them all.

¹ The fool has said in his heart:
"There is no God above."
Their deeds are corrupt, depraved;
not a good man is left. **R**

² From heaven the Lord looks down
on the sons of men
to see if any are wise,
if any seek God. **R**

³ All have left the right path,
depraved, every one;
there is not a good man left,
no, not even one. **R**

⁴ Will the evil-doers not understand?
They eat up my people
as though they were eating bread:
they never pray to the Lord. **R**

⁵ See how they tremble with fear
without cause for fear:
for God is with the just.

⁶ You may mock the poor man's hope,
but his refuge is the Lord.

**✠ God made all men prisoners of disobedience, that he might show
mercy to them all.**

⁷ O that Israel's salvation might come from Zion!
When the Lord delivers his people from bondage,
then Jacob will be glad and Israel rejoice. ✠

**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: The psalmist who composed this poem at a time of atheism and depravity sought to draw the people back to their religious roots in the midst of accentuated foreign influences. This also followed the prophetic tradition of condemning the ungodly and defending the righteous and the poor. This Psalm belongs to the Psalter of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) hence the use of LORD which indicates the diving name (Yahweh). Psalm 53 is almost identical, but differs in verses 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7, where instead of LORD – there is simply ‘God’ – Elohim in Hebrew. It was the Southern Kingdom which used Yahweh and Elohim, and the Northern Kingdom which used Elohim. When the Northern Kingdom was invaded in 722 BC by Assyria, the intellectuals fled south with their works, including the Psalter and this was added to the Southern Psalter, where one Psalm was common to both apart from the name of God.

Post Communion

God our creator, you feed your children with the true manna, the living bread from heaven: let this holy food sustain us through our earthly pilgrimage until we come to that place where hunger and thirst are no more; through 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.**