

Sunday 3rd November 2019

4th Sunday before Advent

Red or Green



Collect

Almighty and eternal God, you have kindled the flame of love in the hearts of the saints: grant to us the same faith and power of love, that, as we rejoice in their triumphs, we may be sustained by their example and fellowship; 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**

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 English Standard Version (ESV)

Greeting

1¹ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

3³ We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers,^[a] as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. 4⁴ Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.

The Judgment at Christ's Coming

5⁵ This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— 6⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from^[b] the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. 11¹¹ To this end we always pray for

you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfil every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Footnotes: a. or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church. b. or *destruction that comes from*.

COMMENT: In this letter, probably penned by a disciple of Paul at the end of the first century, faithfulness in difficult times is the central message. The congregation to which author wrote had grown in faith and in love for each other under considerable persecution. So Christian community could boast of their faithfulness and mutual love in other congregations. He prayed for them to continue in their witness to Christ as they had been doing so well. We have only slight data on the exact nature of the Thessalonians struggle. In the first Letter to the Thessalonians by Paul, and in his early ministry among them Paul had taught them the gospel clearly. There appears to have been an attack on them by some unidentified exterior evil force. The object of the attack may well have been Paul himself or his teaching. Whatever the attack, Paul sought only to encourage the Thessalonians to continue their strong witness. The Author praised them for their steadfast perseverance under persecution (verse 4). He prayed for them to be worthy of their call to be God's people in their community and to have the spiritual strength to fulfil God's purpose. He asked that their every act might be motivated by faith and so show by their daily living in him that Jesus really is Lord (verses 11-12).

Luke 19:1-10 English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus and Zacchaeus

19¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything,

I restore it fourfold.”⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.”¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

COMMENT: Jesus continually challenged the traditional view of who is faithful. In Roman times, tax collecting was rented out to the highest bidder who then could extort whatever he could from the general populace. As a Roman lackey and profiteer, Zaccheus was a much despised man as well as too short to see over the crowds gathered to see Jesus enter Jericho. Yet Jesus sought him out and invited himself to his home to dine. When Zaccheus promised to be generous to the poor and repay what he had taken by fraud, Jesus praised him as a son of Abraham, the Jewish ideal of a faithful servant of God. Whose values apply today? Do we always do whatever gains most for us or does faith help us stand out from the crowd?

Psalm 32 *Beati quorum* Grail Psalter

℟️ Forgive, Lord, the guilt of my sin.

¹ Happy the man whose offence is forgiven,
whose sin is remitted.

² O happy the man to whom the Lord
imputes no guilt,
in whose spirit is no guile. **℟️**

³ I kept it secret and my frame was wasted.
I groaned all day long,
4 for night and day your hand was heavy upon me.
Indeed my strength was dried up
as by the summer's heat. **℟️**

⁵ But now I have acknowledged my sins;
my guilt I did not hide.
I said: “I will confess
my offense to the Lord.”
And you, Lord, have forgiven
the guilt of my sin. **℟️**

⁶ So let every good man pray to you
in the time of need.

The floods of water may reach high
but him they shall not reach.

⁷ You are my hiding place, O Lord;
you save me from distress.

(You surround me with cries of deliverance.) **℟️**

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you
the way you should go;
I will give you counsel
with my eye upon you.

℟ **Forgive, Lord, the guilt of my sin.**

⁹ Be not like horse and mule, unintelligent,
needing bridle and bit
else they will not approach you.

¹⁰ Many sorrows has the wicked
but he who trusts in the Lord,
loving mercy surrounds him. **℟**

¹¹ Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord,
exult, you just!

O come, ring out your joy,
all you upright of heart. **℟**

**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 a witness to the assurance of God's forgiveness for the penitent soul. It acknowledges both the universal sinfulness of humanity and the prevenient mercy of God (a grace that precedes even our willingness to repent or confess). **NOTE:** The term “prevenient grace” refers to a universal grace, which precedes and enables the first stirrings of a good will or inclination toward God – he leads us to himself – we need to follow that lead.

Post Communion

Lord of heaven, in this Eucharist you have brought us near to an innumerable company of angels and to the spirits of the saints made perfect: as in this food of our earthly pilgrimage we have shared their fellowship, so may we come to share their joy in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Blessing

Christ our King make you faithful and strong to do his will, that you may reign with him in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**