

Sunday 12th January 2020

The Second Sunday of Epiphany

White



Collect

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; 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 49:1-7 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Servant of the LORD

49¹ Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name.² He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away.³ And he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”^[a]⁴ But I said, “I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God.”⁵ And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him— for I am honoured in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength—⁶ he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”⁷ Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: “Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

Footnotes: a. or *I will display my beauty*.

COMMENT: Israel’s mission as God’s servant people is further elaborated in another of the Servant Songs found in the latter part of the Book of Isaiah. Here the mission is not only to return the Israelites to their homeland after two generations in exile in Babylon, but to bring the good news of God’s redemption to all the world. This reading contains only the first three strophes of a poem and describes the prophet’s call and mission. Verse 3 definitely identifies the servant as Israel. The capture of Babylon by Cyrus the Mede was such an event which undoubtedly had great significance for the exiled Jews. The prophet was discouraged (verse 4) that his faithful witness had little or no effect on his compatriots. The inspiration he received, however, was that his work has not been in vain. Not only is Israel to be brought back to its rightful master, the LORD; but as the LORD’s servant he and they were given a still greater mission: to be “a light to the nations” that the LORD’s “salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”(verse 6) The despised nation which has been

subservient to many rulers would be seen to rise and receive the obeisance of kings and princes because this was the will of Israel's faithful God (verse 7). The early Church saw in this scripture an image of the messiah.

John 1:29-42 English Standard Version (ESV)

Behold, the Lamb of God

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, 'after me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptising with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³² And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptise with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptises with the Holy Spirit.'" ³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

Jesus calls the First Disciples

³⁵ The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ^[a] ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus ^[b] was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). ⁴² He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter ^[c]).

Footnotes: a. that is, about 4 pm. b. Greek *him* c. *Cephas* and *Peter* are from the word for *rock* in Aramaic and Greek, respectively.

COMMENT: John recognised Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." This was one of the main themes of John's Gospel. The term "the Lamb of God" had its roots in the Jewish ritual of sacrifice. There seems little doubt, however, that the daily offerings of unblemished lambs in the temple came to John's mind as he began his narrative of Jesus ministry. This symbolism of the sacrificial lamb was later adopted by the church as part of the order for the Eucharist. John himself had this in mind too in his correlation of the death of Jesus with the hour when the Pascal lamb was killed. (See John 19:31-36.) Note that this gospel never states that John baptised Jesus (it may have been assumed we already know this). John merely tells his disciples that while he baptised with water, Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit. Note also that it was John, not Jesus, who saw the Spirit descending as a dove. This may be a reflection of the Spirit brooding over the waters of the Jordan as on the day of creation and Noah's dove searching for a place to settle? The next day, two of John disciples left John and followed Jesus, first out of curiosity, then out of conviction. Surprisingly, it was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, who made the first confession that Jesus was the Messiah. If the gospel came from the personal testimony of John, the son of Zebedee, we have here an independent tradition perhaps more

accurate than that of the Synoptic Gospels. How else would we know the nickname Jesus gave in Aramaic to what appears the most unlikely of persons the “Rock?”

Psalm 40 *Expectans, expectavi* Grail Psalter

℟ Here I am, Lord! I come to do your will.

¹ *For the Choirmaster. Of David. A Psalm.*

² I waited, I waited for the Lord
and he stooped down to me;
he heard my cry. ℟

³ He drew me from the deadly pit,
from the miry clay.
He set my feet upon a rock
and made my footsteps firm. ℟

⁴ He put a new song into my mouth,
praise of our God.
Many shall see and fear
and shall trust in the Lord. ℟

⁵ Happy the man who has placed
his trust in the Lord
and has not gone over to the rebels
who follow false gods. ℟

⁶ How many, O Lord my God,
are the wonders and designs
that you have worked for us;
you have no equal.
Should I proclaim and speak of them,
they are more than I can tell! ℟

⁷ You do not ask for sacrifice and offerings,
but an open ear.
You do not ask for holocaust and victim.

⁸ Instead, here am I. ℟

In the scroll of the book it stands written
⁹ that I should do your will.
My God, I delight in your law
in the depth of my heart. ℟

¹⁰ Your justice I have proclaimed
in the great assembly.
My lips I have not sealed;
you know it, O Lord. ℟

¹¹ I have not hidden your justice in my heart
but declared your faithful help.
I have not hidden your love and your truth
from the great assembly.

✠ Here I am, Lord! I come to do your will.

¹² O Lord, you will not withhold
your compassion from me.
Your merciful love and your truth
will always guard me. ✠

**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 the first part of a composite psalm which originally existed as two separate entities. Proof is found in Psalm 70 where verses 13-17 occur independently. Verse 12 is a transitional bridge between the two parts. In this first section (verses 1-11, our reading today) it appears that the psalmist rejoiced and thanked God for recovery from a serious illness or some other unstated disaster. The second was an appeal for help in the face of enemies. In our reading the poet did not die; hence his rejoicing and renewed trust in God expressed so vividly in verse 3. His persistent trust in the LORD triumphed and brought him a new sense of divine grace not only to himself, but to his fellow believers with whom he could now worship (verse 5). Rather than making a ritual sacrifice or an offering, the psalmist had discovered that telling others of his deliverance would be his way of expressing gratitude. He had been given a wondrous insight into the LORD's ways and the LORD's will. He cannot but rejoice and tell of his rich experience of the LORD's steadfast love (verses 9-11).

Short Preface

And now we give you thanks because, in the incarnation of the Word, a new light has dawned upon the world, that all the nations may be brought out of darkness to see the radiance of your glory.

Post Communion

God of glory, you nourish us with your Word who is the bread of life: fill us with your Holy Spirit that through us the light of your glory may shine in all the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ the Son of God perfect in you the image of his glory and gladden your hearts with the good news of his kingdom; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**