

Sunday 26th February 2017

Sunday next before Lent

Quinquagesima

Green



Collect

Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

2 Peter 1:16-19 English Standard Version (ESV)

Christ's Glory and the Prophetic Word

2¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son,^[a] with whom I am well pleased,” ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Footnote: a. or my Son, my (or the) Beloved.

COMMENT: The Second Letter of Peter remains one of the enigmas of the NT. Although it bears the name of Peter, most scholars consider that as a pseudonym used by an unknown author early in the 2nd century to give his letter apostolic authority. The author sincerely believed, however, that he expressed Peter's views if confronted by a similar situation. Several references indicate that the author was familiar with at least some of the gospels as well as the letter of Paul and the

general epistle of Jude. The threat facing the church at this time has usually been considered to have been the Gnostic heresy. Also there may have been a threat from libertinism opposed to Christian ethical standards common to any declining society. In the face of this opposition, the author presents a strong defence of the apostolic expectation of judgment and salvation at the Parousia as the true motivation for rigorous moral behaviour. In this light, the author has interpreted this sole reference to the Transfiguration outside the first three Gospels (verses 16-18) as a guarantee of Christ's coming in glory as eternal judge and ruler. That element of the faith had played a significant part in early Christian teaching, but had fallen into decline by the early 2nd century. The claim to be an eyewitness of this event (verses 16b-17) serves the author as proof of authenticity. He may well have had one or other of the synoptic gospels at hand, possibly Mark's Gospel, if as some speculate, he was the leader of the church in Rome which already regarded Peter as its prestigious founder. The further reference to divinely inspired prophecies (verses 19-21) would also confirm his familiarity with other scriptures of the Jewish tradition in which similar testaments and apocalypses were common.

Matthew 17:1-9 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Transfiguration

17 ¹ And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son,^[a] with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. ⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."

Footnote: a. or my Son, my (or the) Beloved.

COMMENT: Does any other story of Jesus' ministry greater contain more mystery than this? Was it a vision revealing to the disciples Jesus' true nature and his future glory after death? Or was this an interpretation of what the ministry of Jesus meant to the church founded by the apostles? The cloud and the voice symbolised not only the close presence of God, but God's designation of Jesus as Messiah first stated in his baptism. The appearance of Moses and Elijah, as well as Peter's desire to build three tabernacles, indicated that this renewed revelation at this crucial moment in Jesus' ministry still maintained the vital connection with the law and the prophets of Israel. It also reflected the early apostolic church's sense of unbreakable continuity with the spiritual tradition of Israel.

Psalm 2 *Quare fremuerunt gentes* Grail Psalter

✠ I will give you the nations for your heritage.

¹ Why this tumult among nations,
among peoples this useless murmuring?

² They arise, the kings of the earth,
princes plot against the Lord and his Anointed.

³ "Come, let us break their fetters,
come, let us cast off their yoke." ✠

⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord is laughing them to scorn.

⁵ Then he will speak in his anger,
his rage will strike them with terror.

⁶ "It is I who have set up my king
on Zion, my holy mountain." ✠

⁷ (I will announce the decree of the Lord:)
The Lord said to me: "You are my Son.
It is I who have begotten you this day.

⁸ Ask and I shall bequeath you the nations,
put the ends of the earth in your possession.

⁹ With a rod of iron you will break them,
shatter them like a potter's jar." ✠

¹⁰ Now, O kings, understand,
take warning, rulers of the earth;
¹¹ serve the Lord with awe
and trembling, pay him your homage
¹² lest he be angry and you perish;
for suddenly his anger will blaze.
Blessed are they who put their trust in God.

✠ I will give you the nations for your heritage.

**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: Here we have a distinctly Messianic Psalm. Such Psalms were treated as prophecy in the New Testament times and in the early Church pointing to Jesus as Messiah. The Kingdom of God is to be founded and maintained by an anointed King who is the Son of God and his vicar on earth. The poet speaks as if the ideal King had already ascended His throne, or that this is a coronation psalm. More conservative commentators have put the Psalm back as far as David's time or on to that of Alexander Jannæus, a bloodthirsty prince of Maccabean race who died in 78 BC. The Psalm envisions Israel's King as ruling over other kingdoms. This would still fit a messianic theme as Christ is seen as the King of the whole earth. The Psalm is frequently quoted in the New Testament (Acts 4:25; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5; Revelation 2:27; Revelation 19:15).

Post Communion

Holy God, we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ: may we who are partakers at his table reflect his life in word and deed, that all the world may know his power to change and save. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary, fill you with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**