

Sunday 29th March 2020

The Fifth Sunday of Lent

Purple

Passiontide begins



Collect

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; 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**

Romans 8:6-11 English Standard Version (ESV)

Life in the Spirit

8⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus^[a] from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Footnotes: a. some manuscripts lack *Jesus*.

COMMENT: Paul discusses two levels of existence: the physical which will end when our physical resources are exhausted; and the spiritual with the ongoing assurance of eternal life. It is difficult for us who have a relatively comfortable existence with moderately effective support systems to contemplate exactly what Paul meant by this contrast. We find it all too easy “to set our minds on the flesh” and leave whatever lies beyond to theological argument. In many respects, Paul may have been recalling the two ways of life the book Deuteronomy had set before Israel: the way of life and the way of death. But the Deuteronomy emphasized obedience to the law of the covenant as the means of assuring the Israelites a life of security in the land promised to their patriarchal ancestors forever (Deuteronomy 30:19-20). It is here that Paul differed with his ancestral tradition. He had a totally different picture in mind. Life focused only on this world and on satisfying one’s natural impulses is the way to the death that is ultimately separation from God. This is the end for those who “set their minds on the flesh.” Paul wrote after the resurrection of Christ and Pentecost, when the Spirit the prophet Joel promised would come “in the last days” had actually been “poured out” on the Christian community. As he says in verse 9, “the Spirit of God dwells in you.” For him, the Spirit-filled life is full of energy and intimacy with God now and forever. Thus Paul was not dreaming of an other-worldly existence “in the sky by and by.” He knew

full well that every human life must be lived in the real world. It was the kind of life one lives that is so important to him. This is nothing short of the life of Christ in us made real and effective by the work of the Spirit (verses 10-11). Equally important in Paul's thinking is the empowering action of God, Christ and the Spirit in the life of the ordinary Christian. Nowhere in the New Testament is the activity of what the church subsequently defined as the three Persons of the Trinity more clearly expressed. In this passage the three are virtually interchangeable. Paul goes so far as to use the two phrases "the Spirit of God" and the "Spirit of Christ" in successive sentences. He had fully comprehended the truth that God acted in Jesus Christ, not only throughout Jesus' human life and ministry, but especially in raising Jesus from the dead to be the living Christ present to all believers through the Spirit actively changing our lives here and now (verse 11).

John 11:1-45 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Death of Lazarus

11¹ Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.² It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus^[a] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?"⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him."¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep.¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died,¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin,^[b] said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

I Am the Resurrection and the Life

¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles^[c] off,¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in

the resurrection on the last day.”²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.^[d] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

Jesus Weeps

²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.³¹ When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved^[e] in his spirit and greatly troubled.³⁴ And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ Jesus wept.³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”

Jesus Raises Lazarus

³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.³⁹ Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.”⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

The Plot to Kill Jesus

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

Footnotes: a. Greek *he*; also verse 17. b. Greek *Didymus*. c. Greek *fifteen stadia*; a *stadion* was about 607 feet or 185 meters. d. some manuscripts omit *and the life*. e. or *was indignant*; also verse 38.

COMMENT: The story of the raising of Lazarus is the sixth of seven signs John gives to prove that Jesus is the Messiah/Christ, Son of God, and that through faith in him believers receive eternal life. Even as the event shows Jesus’ divine power over death itself, it also shows him as a wonderfully sensitive human being. His love for Lazarus is palpable. Martha’s and Mary’s accusation that Jesus’ presence would have averted Lazarus’ death tells how real their friendship was. So also did Jesus’

tears. The account, is also John's reflection on the significance of the resurrection. Because Jesus is fully human and fully divine, life and death are his gifts to give.

Psalm 130 *De profundis* Grail Psalter

℟ With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,

² Lord, hear my voice!

O let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading. **℟**

³ If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, who would survive?

⁴ But with you is found forgiveness:
for this we revere you. **℟**

⁵ My soul is waiting for the Lord.
I count on his word.

⁶ My soul is longing for the Lord
more than watchman for daybreak.

(Let the watchman count on daybreak

⁷ and Israel on the Lord.) **℟**

Because with the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption,

⁸ Israel indeed he will redeem
from all its iniquity. **℟**

**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: As a prayer of penitence this psalm has few equals. It reflects of an actual situation evoking a desperate cry for God's forgiveness. The need to be reconciled to God has universal application in the patient hope with which the psalm ends.

Post Communion

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters we do also for you: give us the will to be the servant of others as you were the servant of all, and gave up your life and died for us, but are alive and reign, now and for ever. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**