

God's Word for this Week

Sunday 6th September 2020

The Passover



THE COLLECT

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

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 and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

The First Reading

Moses is sent to speak to the Pharaoh on God's behalf, requesting the release of the Israelite Slaves. When the pharaoh refuses, God unleashes 10 plagues on the Egyptians, including turning the Nile River red with blood, diseased livestock, boils, hailstorms and three days of darkness, culminating in the slaying of every firstborn son.

The Israelites, however, mark the doorframes of their homes with lamb's blood so that the angel of death will recognize and "pass over" each Jewish household.

Exodus 12: 1-14

12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ²This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. ⁴If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. ⁷They shall take some of the



blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and

animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the Lord. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

Certain parts of scripture are difficult to accept or to absorb because they present us with an entirely different image of the God that Jesus portrayed in his life. The drama of the plagues in Israel and the misery brought about due to this, seems to pale in comparison to the tragedy in the killing of the firstborn males within their homes (a direct response to Pharaoh's putting to death the Israelite male babies on the birthing stool!). What does this passage teach us other than the power of the Almighty to destroy at will?!

Perhaps some form of reckoning can be found in the words of the renowned Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon when he writes;

‘There was in Egypt, that night, a saved Israel—saved because of the blood sprinkled outside their houses—and I hope we have here many members of a saved nation—saved not because of anything they are or ever will be in themselves, but because Jesus has suffered in their place and His blood interposes between God and them.’ (Charles Spurgeon, Baptist Preacher, 1834-1892)

Would it be too simple a suggestion that (holistically) the Old Testament represents God’s constant struggle to create and maintain a ‘righteous’ relationship with us on earth; that the horror of wars and destruction lie in stark contrast to the love and compassion of the Christ? Certainly that righteous connection sought by God has been realised through the person of Jesus Christ. Now God is wide open to us every day through Christ.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER: The struggle for relationship with God is clearly apparent in the Bible. Why not re-affirm your faith in the Almighty today; coming to him authentically with your thanks and worries. Speaking to God as to a friend strengthens the relationship between us.

This is a new way of thinking and a new type of power which is further developed in the Epistle for this week. LOVE is the word that sums up all relationships in our God who is love as the Epistle continues..

The Second Reading

Romans 13: 8-14

8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; ¹³let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Isn’t this one of the most beautiful images in the bible – the Armour of Light! Truly believing in God and his hand at work in our lives changes things; we view the world and those around us through a greater light that comes from within us! This is the beginning of life in abundance and the one thing that Jesus truly wishes for us. Sometimes it help to imagine (perhaps as your day begins) that you are surrounding yourself with the light of God and that this light will permeate your decisions and reactions to every situation this day.

Father, assist me in believing that your light surrounds and guides me this day and always. Amen.

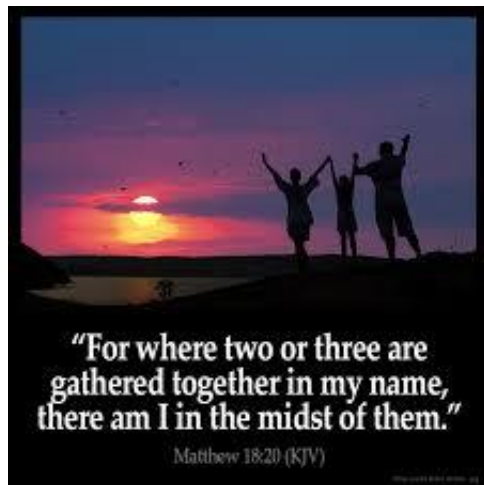


The Gospel Reading

Matthew 18: 15-20

15 ‘If another member of the church* sins against you,* go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.* ¹⁶But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three

witnesses. ¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'



The beginning of this passage gives practical guidance for facing into difficulties within groups of people and, just as Jesus is careful to pass on instructions regarding the Kingdom of Heaven and how to live this Kingdom in our lives, so too he provides practical ways of dealing with disagreements and conflicts. It is at the end of this passage that we hear those reassuring words 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them'. Jesus is reminding us again today of his presence and his power. What we really need behind the requests we make is complete faith in Christ.

