

LITURGY NOTES

Fall 2022

In This Issue

This issue of *Liturgy Notes* covers the readings and song suggestions for fall, from September through the Solemnity of Christ the King, with notes on Thanksgiving and the end of Ordinary Time, especially with Luke's gospel.

Approaching the End of the Year

In Ordinary Time, readings are not chosen to “fit” with any particular seasonal emphasis. We read the gospel in a semi-continuous way, proceeding in order from one passage to another, while skipping some passages. In the second reading on Sundays, we proceed the same way through the epistles. This “course reading” might seem random from one Sunday to the next, but still, there are certain emphases that appear regularly as Ordinary Time, and the liturgical year itself, approaches the end.

The end of any gospel is the Passion narrative, the empty tomb, and the post-Resurrection appearances, but of course, those are read in Holy Week, the Triduum, and the Easter season. The end of Ordinary Time gives us last things a synoptic gospel mentions before moving on toward Jerusalem and Jesus' death. We get many of Jesus' miracles and sayings, and as the season comes to its end, talk of the Second Coming. While there are profound ethical considerations in many of these narratives, there is also a strong eschatological sense: Jesus is proclaiming the Reign of God, which is inaugurated in himself, and the fulfillment of which we await at the end of time. By the end of the season, this focus moves us smoothly from the end of Ordinary Time and into Advent, the eschatological season *par excellence*.

So, since Vatican II, Ordinary Time concludes with the Solemnity of Christ the King (or now, in our newer translation, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe”). Far from simply triumphalistic jingoism, this feast calls us to look at our world, especially the most powerful, in contrast to the kind of Kingdom Christ proclaims: a reign marked by the power of humility, peace, and hope for the hopeless. Christ's proclamation of the Reign of God inverts and subverts the idolatry of power, and calls upon his disciples to do the same.

In Year C, all of this is even more potent and striking, because we're reading from Luke's gospel. Many of the gospel readings and accompanying first readings this fall place great emphasis on the poor and the oppressed, and the command to God's people to embrace the “preferential option for the poor.” In the Christ the King gospel this year, Jesus speaks and reigns *from the cross*. Those of us who claim to serve Christ must face his radical identification with the “least of these,” and in our liturgies we need to resist the temptation so soften or downplay this important aspect of the gospel.

September 11, 2022

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: Exodus 32:7–11, 13–14

In the Book of Exodus, Moses ascends Mt. Sinai in order to receive the *Torah* and to spend time in God's presence. While he is away, the Israelites struggle to maintain their confidence in Moses, for it seems he has abandoned them (Exod 32:1). They are a displaced people who are free from their labours, but frightened and in need of leadership. The Israelites look to Aaron, Moses' brother and spokesperson (Exod 4:13–14), for guidance, and he instructs them to donate their gold items in order to cast an image of a calf. Curiously, although only one calf is mentioned, the people proclaim, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" (Exod 32:4). This discrepancy might be related to the similar event in 1 Kings 12:28, when two bull calves are installed in the Northern Israel following the division of the kingdoms in 922 BC.

Why would the people construct a golden calf in the first place? Throughout the Ancient Near East the bull was a symbol of strength. Images like bulls can be found on depictions of thrones from this time, and so one possible explanation is that the image of the golden calf was intended as a throne for God. Nevertheless, the people clearly mistakenly identify the calf as an object of worship itself, and God's indignation requires Moses' intercession to calm. Moses does not try to make excuses for the people. Instead, he reminds God of the covenantal promises made with the patriarchs. Even if the people have proven unreliable, God's *hesed* (steadfast love and loyalty) must never waver.

Psalm: Psalm 51

Psalm 51 is one of the seven penitential psalms (the others are Psalms 6, 32, 28, 102, 130, and 143). This psalm is associated with David's remorse following his transgression against

Uriah and Bathsheba. It expresses heartfelt contrition and the desire for a "clean heart."

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12–17

Paul reflects on the grace of forgiveness he has received from Jesus Christ. Paul's experience of having persecuted early followers of Jesus, only to become one himself, profoundly affected his theological understanding of Jesus' "work" of salvation. Through his experience of the risen Christ, Paul comes to realize that salvation is not something a person manufactures for themselves through their actions or words, but is instead a gift offered to everyone—even those perceived as unworthy.

Gospel: Luke 15:1–32

In today's gospel reading, Jesus offers three parables on the subject of repentance and forgiveness. We tend to gravitate to the well-known third parable of the prodigal son, yet it is important to attune ourselves both to the context of Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees, and also to the first two parables.

The Pharisees criticize Jesus associating with tax collectors and sinners. In the honour/shame society the first century, Jesus' consorting with these reviled figures of society would bring corresponding levels of shame to his own reputation—and to anyone who was in contact with Jesus. In response to the Pharisees, Jesus shares three parables that chart a trajectory of loss, searching, and rejoicing.

In the first two parables, Jesus uses images that would resonate with his hearers because of their immediate economic implications. For both the shepherd of the first parable and the woman in the second parable, their rejoicing is genuine and understandable. Both the lost sheep and the lost coin would have been important aspects of a household economy, and their loss would have been keenly felt. But perhaps the Pharisees grumbled some more, and pointed out that neither tax collectors nor sinners were "useful" like the sheep or coin. The tax collectors were society's most detested leeches, and the sinners were nobodies.

Jesus' third parable illustrates how God loves and welcomes the return of even the most lost members of humanity, the ones who seemingly bring no good to their households or communities. The younger son certainly disrespects his father by asking for his inheritance early, and his flagrant spending shows how little disregard he has for his father's gift. However, another way to think about this parable is that, as the younger son, the Prodigal was socially and generationally far less important than the elder son. The elder son would be the one to inherit the family property, the father's name and status, and the father's authority. The younger son would not have been "useful" for the overall running of the household in the same way as his brother. In fact, he would be less than the sheep or the coin in the first two parables. He would be a hanger-on, an expense, and a liability.

It is shocking, therefore, that the Father sees his son coming from a far distance, (suggesting that he had been looking for him), and that he runs and embraces him and celebrates his return with a lavish feast. And it is no wonder that the older son is upset and resentful, because he has lived up to every expectation for his role as the next leader of the household. Jesus' point to the Pharisees is that the tax collectors and sinners, while "useless" in society, are beloved of God, who keeps a totally different accounting of humanity than our own social systems do.

Reflection

As the school year gets underway again, these readings speak especially to youth for whom the first few weeks of the academic year are a time of transition, changing social landscapes, and new challenges. The readings provide hope that any mistakes made along the way can be brought to God in prayer, as Moses and the Psalmist show us. Jesus' parables reveal that God's response will be given in compassion and love.

Reflecting the Word in Song

- All Creatures of Our God and King
(LASST UNS ERFREUEN) CBW 543 / SS 203
- All the Ends of the Earth (B. Dufford)
G 378 / GP 7
- Be Not Afraid (B. Dufford)
CBW 481 / G 430 / GP 24 / SS 271
- God Our Author and Creator (BEACH SPRING)
CIS 6.32
- Lord of All Hopefulness (SLANE)
CBW 497
- Lord, You Search Me and You Know Me
(NETTLETON) CBW 474
- O Lord, Hear My Prayer (J. Berthier/Taizé)
CBW 491 / G 410
- On Eagle's Wings (J.M. Joncas)
G 433 / GP 151
- Save Us, O Lord (B. Dufford)
GP 186
- Seek the Lord (R. O'Connor)
GP 187
- Shelter Me, O God (B. Hurd)
CBW 372 / G 449
- You Are Near (D. Schutte)
CBW 487 / G 428 / GP 242

September 18, 2022

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: Amos 8:4-7

The prophet Amos lived in the mid-700s BC in the southern kingdom of Judah. He is considered to be the earliest "writing" prophet, whose oracles were preserved in written form. Amos was a farmer (Amos 7:14) with a keen sense of social justice. He was particularly appalled by the abuses taking place in the northern kingdom of Israel, and he travelled north in order to publicly condemn

the horrendous treatment of the poor by the upper aristocratic classes.

In today's excerpt, Amos rails against the wealthy's obsession with profit and the exploitation of workers. Amos' message is just as pertinent in our modern world. Today he would be a voice speaking out against consumer capitalism that chases profit over humane working conditions, or business practices that exploit labourers' energy and personal resources. Amos' message remains as relevant today as it did nearly three thousand years ago.

Psalm: Psalm 113

A joyful psalm of praise that marvels in the insight that God, who powerfully created earth and heavens, also cares for the most marginal in society.

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Paul emphasizes the effectiveness of prayer and the close relationship between God and Jesus Christ. It is important to bear in mind that Paul is writing long before doctrinal statements about Jesus' relationship to the Father had been established (i.e. in 325 AD in Nicaea). Nevertheless, it is amazing to observe how early in Christian history, Paul, perhaps the first Christological theologian, recognizes the oneness between God and Jesus.

Gospel: Luke 16:1-13

The Lectionary indicates that a shorter reading of the gospel passage may be used; however, the entire excerpt functions as a sustained teaching and should be read as a whole. While some parables are certainly symbolic (e.g., "the kingdom of God is like..."), it is helpful to read this parable first in terms of the economic situation it describes.

In today's gospel, Jesus uses an enigmatic parable of a rich man whose property manager (or steward) has been irresponsible with his assets. The landowner discovers the steward's recklessness, and he demands an accounting of his actions before letting him go. The dishonest (literally, "unrighteous") steward,

knowing that he faces justice, systematically reduces the balances owing of various debtors of the master. He does this in order to increase his favour among the debtors, so that at least one of them will take him in. Notice that the landowner does not deal with his debtors directly: the steward is the mediator between the two parties and so is in a significantly powerful position. Strangely, the master commends the dishonest steward! Then Jesus says, "for the children of this age are more shrewd [lit. "wise"] in dealing with their own generation than are the children of the light" (Luke 16:8). Jesus' statement illuminates the whole quirky parable. The dishonest steward planned ahead and prepared for what would happen to him after judgment. He did not try to deny his actions, but rather used his same methods to make his fate at least comfortable. Jesus' message works from a "light to heavy" argument: if the dishonest steward could use his habits to ensure his wellbeing, so must the children of the light plan ahead and use their habits of righteousness to ensure their eschatological peace.

Lest his hearers think the message is to be dishonest, Jesus concludes this teaching with the importance of being faithful, even in small things, and the necessity of single-minded worship of God. His compelling economic imagery is as relevant now as it was then.

Reflection

Today's readings invite us to some very concrete and tangible points of reflection. In essence they ask, "what is our relationship with stuff"? Have we made acquisitions and assets more important than care for the poor and marginalized? Do we place more importance on the accumulation of wealth than we do on nurturing a relationship with God?

Reflecting the Word in Song

Anthem (T. Conry)

G 494 / GP 13

Christ, Be Our Light (B. Farrell)

CIS 6.31 / SS 207

Christians, Let Us Love One Another (PICARDY)	CBW 595
The Eyes and Hands of Christ (T. Kendzia)	SS 234
For the Healing of the Nations (WESTMINSTER ABBEY)	CBW 503
God Has Chosen Me (B. Farrell)	G 488
God of Day and God of Darkness (BEACH SPRING)	CBW 477 / G 551
Here I Am, Lord (D. Schutte)	CBW 520 / SS 250
Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service (IN BABILONE)	CBW 507
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (HYFRYDOL)	CBW 625
Prayer of St. Francis (S. Temple)	G 524 / SS 339
The Servant Song (R. Gillard)	G 476
Ubi Caritas (J. Berthier/Taizé)	CBW 67 / G 301

September 25, 2022

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Continuing our reading from last Sunday, Amos blasts the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Zion) and Mt. Samaria (Israel) who pass their time in luxury while others suffer. Amos paints a stark picture of the gluttonous ways of the rich in contrast to the famished existence of the poor.

Psalm: Psalm 146

Coming near the end of the psalter, Psalm 146 extolls the Lord who has regard for the most marginalized in society.

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 6:11-19

Paul encourages Timothy to persevere in faith and to be unafraid to confess his faith publicly. He references Jesus' courageous testimony before Pilate as a model for the conviction of faith necessary to proclaim the gospel. Paul also references the *parousia*, Jesus' return in glory, and acknowledges Jesus as "King of kings and Lord of lords." The implication is that as a "man of God," Timothy should understand himself to be participating in a much higher calling than this-worldly politics and economics.

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

In this remarkable passage Jesus teaches of the importance of care for the poor and marginalized through the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (traditionally known as "Dives and Lazarus"). Several details emphasize the Rich Man's separation from the reality of poverty around him. His clothing speaks of great wealth and authority, and he feasts "sumptuously every day." In contrast, on the other side of the Rich Man's gate, Lazarus lies impoverished. Rather than being clothed in luxurious garments, Lazarus is covered in sores. His belly is so empty, he craves even crumbs from the rich man's table (compare the Syro-Phoenecian woman in Mark 7:28). Disgustingly, the dogs lick his sores, further diminishing his humanity.

Notice, however, that in contrast to the anonymous Rich Man, Lazarus is named. His name is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Eleazar" and it means "God has helped." While this might seem terribly ironic during his lifetime, when Lazarus dies, he is taken by the "Angels to be with Abraham." Although we do not know anything about Lazarus' moral life, God has compassion on his poverty and suffering, and ensures that he finds comfort in the afterlife.

When the Rich Man also dies, and is buried (rather than carried away by the Angels), he sees Abraham and Lazarus far above him. During this time, the realm of Hades was considered to be stratified, with those who were more righteous higher up, and those who were particularly wicked further down. The Rich Man, like Tantalus of Greek mythology, faces an eternity of thirst, and he asks for Lazarus to be sent to bring him even just a drop of water. Abraham explains that the Rich Man, by ensuring their separation in life also cemented their separation in death. Furthermore, Abraham denies the Rich Man's request that Lazarus should go instead to his brothers to warn them. Abraham points out that the scriptures (Moses and the Prophets) contain sufficient instruction and warning about the importance to care for the poor and marginalized. They won't listen to Moses and the Prophets, Abraham asserts, neither will they listen to someone who has risen from the dead.

The parable is replete with references to Israel's heritage: Abraham, Lazarus (God has Helped), Moses and the Prophets. In this way Jesus demonstrates that the care of the poor and marginalized is an intrinsic part of the tradition.

Reflection

Today is the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, and these readings deliver a powerful message to contemplate as individuals, families, and parishes. How do we respond to the needs of the poorest in our midst, and those who come into our communities, fleeing situations of war, famine, or environmental catastrophe? By providing no details regarding Lazarus' moral status, the gospel reading makes it clear that we should not judge those who need the basics of human survival: food, clean water, shelter, and clothing. The parable also encourages its hearers to understand acts of social justice as rooted in tradition, which in turn must be handed on to the next generation.

Reflecting the Word in Song

- Blest are the Pure in Heart (FRANCONIA) CBW 471
- Blest Be the Lord (D. Schutte) G 437 / GP 31
- Bread for the World (B. Farrell) CIS 6.1 / G 596 / SS 240
- Christ, Be Our Light (B. Farrell) CIS 6.31 / SS 207
- Christians, Let Us Love One Another (PICARDY) CBW 595
- Come to the Water (J. Foley) G 340 / GP 52 / SS 281
- Lord, You Give the Great Commission (ABBOT'S LEIGH) CBW 691
- Prayer of St. Francis (S. Temple) G 524 / SS 339
- The Servant Song (R. Gillard) G 476
- We Live to Love (C. Stephan & S. Hart) SS 367
- We Will Follow (D. Brennan et al) SS 239
- We Will Serve the Lord (R. Cooney) G 473
- You Have Anointed Me (M. Balhoff et al) G 483 / GP 81

October 2, 2022

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

Very little is known about Habakkuk, but it is thought that his oracles reflect either the Babylonian or Persian occupations of Israel and Judah. The Book of Habakkuk takes the form of a dialogue between the prophet and God. When the prophet speaks, he cries out to God in a manner akin to the psalms, urging God to intervene to alleviate the suffering of

the people. When God responds, it is frequently to point out new issues, rather than as a direct response to the prophet. In the passage we hear today, God “speaks of the end,” and so this is a fitting reading for our contemplation as we approach the end of the liturgical year. Over the next eight weeks, the eschatological themes and imagery will intensify, inviting us to self-examination and repentance.

Psalm: Psalm 95

Those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours will recognize Psalm 95 as the invitatory prayer. The portion sung today is an invitation to worship and a petition for an open heart.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6–8, 13–14

Paul writes to Timothy encouraging him in his ministry. Unlike some of Paul’s earlier letters, which address issues in the various communities he founded, the aim of this passage is to provide fraternal support to Timothy from afar. Notice the important key words: power, love, self-discipline, sound teaching, faith, good treasure, and the help of the Holy Spirit. All of these positive concepts remind Timothy that he is part of something broader than his local community, and that he has Paul’s abiding confidence.

Gospel: Luke 17:5–10

In the Greco-Roman world, as in our own day, one’s public status mattered a lot. One’s “honour” was a person’s social currency. The more honour a person had, the more opportunities would present themselves. It was an invisible, yet extraordinarily influential force in day to day living, and when it came to honour, “more” was certainly better. We can see in the Apostles’ request some of the same thinking at play. They want more faith, bigger faith...an accumulation of faith! Jesus’ response teaches them that faith does not work the way honour does, but rather has an entirely different power.

In Greek, the word translated as “faith” is *pistis*. Another way to translate this word is “trust,” because *pistis* is a profound assurance in the rightness or truthfulness of something.

Borrowing from the letter to the Hebrews, we could render the famous lines as “Now trust is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). Thus, when Jesus responds to the Apostles, he teaches them that it is not the amount or size of faith that matters: even if their faith was the size of a tiny mustard seed, amazing things can happen.

In his next saying, Jesus expands his teaching to insist that faith is not something that can be “accomplished” the way a servant completes a task. That is, if the Apostles simply say their required prayers and attend their required services (in the synagogue, for as yet, there were no churches), but do not coordinate these actions and words with trust deep in their hearts, then they have only “done what [they] ought to have done.”

If we distill Jesus’ message, we receive rich insights into the connections between faith, prayer, and action. First, faith is the trust that God is richly present in our lives. Second, our prayer and actions stem from this trust and are activated and made meaningful by it. Prayer that becomes conversation with God builds a relationship, which in turn nurtures our faith.

Reflection

The Apostles’ question is so relatable, isn’t it? We might imagine that as they travel with Jesus they are astounded at the “size” of his trust in God, and understandably want to have this too. Jesus’ response encourages them to look within, to begin with their hearts, rather than their heads or hands. This might seem like a rather evasive answer, and we, like the Apostles, might think, “But if I look within and find very little, what then?!” However, through grace, even the act of self-examination is God at work in us, and through prayer and an open heart we can nurture a companionship with God that is faith—that is trust.

Reflecting the Word in Song

A Living Faith (ST. CATHERINE)	CBW 447
Fill Me, O God (S. Hart & K. Hipp)	SS 293
For You Are My God (J. Foley)	CBW 483 / G 436 / GP 72
God Our Author and Creator (BEACH SPRING)	CIS 6.32
How Can I Keep From Singing (R. Lowry)	G 427 / SS 216
I Know You Are Near (C. Ray)	SS 310
Jesus, Lord (R. DeBruyn)	CBW 365
Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service (IN BABILONE)	CBW 44
On Eagle's Wings (J.M. Joncas)	G 433 / GP 151 / SS 333
Shelter Me, O God (B. Hurd)	CBW 372 / G 449
Stand by Me (T. Kendzia)	SS 352
There is a Longing (A. Quigley)	CIS 6.15 / SS 366
We Walk By Faith (M. Haugen)	CBW 495 / G 414

October 9, 2022

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: 2 Kings 5:14-17

Today's first reading begins in the middle of the story of the encounter between Naaman a mighty warrior from Aram (Damascus) and the prophet Elisha. Elisha lived and worked in the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the 8th century BC, during a time of great social turmoil and an increasing disparity between the rich and the poor. According to 2 Kings, Elisha, having

taken over Elijah's ministry, strives to bring about recognition of God throughout the land, and he gains a reputation as a healer and worker of miracles. Although a mighty warrior, Naaman is afflicted with a skin disease. Naaman—a foreigner—learns about Elisha, and seeks him out in the hopes that Elisha will be able to heal him of his condition.

Elisha instructs Naaman to immerse himself in the River Jordan seven times, and at first Naaman is angry, likely thinking he is being mocked (2 Kings 5:11). Surely Elisha should know that Naaman has tried washing many times! Naaman is also angry because he had hoped for a healing that involved a spectacle. Something that made him feel it was working. It is Naaman's servants who convince him to try bathing in the Jordan, saying "if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash and be clean?'" (2 Kings 5:13). Accordingly, Naaman immerses himself in the Jordan seven times and his skin is "restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:14). Naaman's healing prompts him to acknowledge Yahweh, and he requests earth from Israel so that he can worship Yahweh in his own land.

It is important to consider the ritual details in the first reading. First, as a foreigner to Israel, Naaman would have been considered ritually unclean, and this would have been compounded by his skin disease. Although it is frequently translated as "leprosy," the Hebrew word *tsara'* did not refer to leprosy as we know it today, but rather to types of skin disorders such as eczema or psoriasis. These were considered to be at odds with Israel's purity requirements for worship. Thus, Naaman's impurity as an outsider is compounded by his skin condition. How striking, therefore, that Naaman's skin is restored and that he proclaims devotion to the God of Israel! Why, then, does he ask for two mule-loads of earth? In the days of Ancient Israel it was common for each nation to have its own god who was deeply connected with the land of the nation.

Yahweh was the God of Israel and deeply connected to the land of Israel; Naaman wants to be able to worship Yahweh even when he is back in Aram. Thus, he desires to bring back some of Israel's earth to Aram, so that he can worship Yahweh in his own land. The story of Naaman's healing emphasizes the importance of trust in God and that God can be "knowable" by anyone, including those perceived as outsiders.

Psalm: Psalm 98

Today's psalm picks up on the theme of the first reading, joyfully declaring that God reveals himself to all nations.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

In this brief passage, Paul emphasizes the need for endurance and conviction for being a follower of Jesus. Notice that Paul's "gospel" focuses on Jesus' lineage from David and the fact that he was raised from the dead. Paul's letters were written before the four canonical gospels were penned, and so more emphasis is placed on the Jesus' resurrection than on his healings and teachings. Paul was thoroughly versed in the Jewish scriptures, and so his encounter with the risen Christ indicated to him that the end times (eschaton) had begun. Since only a fully righteous person could be raised from the dead, Paul's faith in the righteousness and holiness of Jesus is unwavering.

Paul says something curious, "if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim 8:13). How should this be interpreted? What is Jesus "faithful" in? In Greek the word translated as "faithful" is *pistos*, which has the sense of "stable, trustworthy, and reliable." Thus, even when believers waver, Jesus will always be constant.

Gospel: Luke 17:11-19

As Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem from the Galilee region, he passes "through the region between Samaria and Galilee" (Luke 17:11). In order to avoid contact with Samaritans, Galilean Jews would often cross the Jordan river to the east, travel through the Decapolis

region, and cross back into Judea once they were further south. Instead, Jesus goes through Samaria, and encounters ten people with leprosy who call out to him, addressing him as "Master" and requesting his mercy (17:13). Just as in the first reading with Naaman and Elisha, these Samaritan people with leprosy would have been considered, by Jews in the first century, as doubly unclean: first they are foreigners, and second they have a skin condition that rendered them ritually impure.

However, skin diseases were not considered permanently defiling. Leviticus 13 details the many ways in which a person with a skin condition could request the examination of a priest and the various criteria that could establish the person's ritual cleanliness. The point of Leviticus 13 is that the person's status as "clean" or "unclean" was determined by a priest and may or may not involve the healing of the skin itself. It is unremarkable, therefore, that when the ten men approach Jesus requesting mercy that Jesus simply says, "Go and show yourselves to the priests" (17:14)—that is what they were supposed to do! What is remarkable is that as they go away from Jesus they are completely healed. One of the men "turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan" (17:15-16). Observe the actions of this man: he turns back, praises God, prostrates himself, and offers thanks. The word used for "turn back" (*hypostrepho*) comes from a Greek term that is used in Greek versions of the Old Testament to translate "repent" (e.g. Jer 4:1). Thus, like Naaman, this Samaritan has a theophanic experience that radically changes his whole life.

Reflection

Today's readings provide powerful testimony to the superabundance of God's mercy. Both the first reading and the Gospel passage make it clear that God's compassion is not limited to a single group of people, but rather is offered to all. This might be very challenging for some of us, for so often we knowingly or unknowingly operate with a merit-based

approach to God’s mercy. Or perhaps we wonder how God’s mercy could possibly extend to people who are not “one of us,” so to speak. St. Paul’s statement—that Jesus is trustworthy—is both reassurance and challenge. It reassures by reminding us that God in Christ Jesus acts in love and compassion. It challenges by encouraging us to look beyond the boundaries of our own groups for signs of God’s mercy.

Reflecting the Word in Song

All My Days (D. Schutte)	GP 3
God Whose Almighty Word (MOSCOW)	CBW 513
God’s Love is Everlasting (T. Tomaszek)	SS 300
Healer of Our Every Ill (M. Haugen)	CBW 363 / G 642
I Will Lift Up Your Name (S. Angrisano/T. Tomaszek)	SS 318
In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful (J. Berthier/Taizé)	G 396
Laudate Omnes Gentes (J. Berthier/Taizé)	CBW 570
Let All Things Now Living (ASH GROVE)	CBW 534
Now Thank We All Our God (NUN DANKET)	CBW 535
Table of the World (NETTLETON)	CIS 6.30
There is a Longing (A. Quigley)	CIS 6.15 / SS 366
We Cannot Measure How You Heal (J. Bell)	G 401
We Remember (M. Haugen)	G 417

Note on Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving has been officially celebrated as an annual holiday in Canada since November 6, 1879. While the date varied by year and was not

fixed, it was commonly the second Monday in October. On January 31, 1957, the Governor General Vincent Massey issued a proclamation stating: “A Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed—to be observed on the second Monday in October.”

In 2022, Canadians observe Thanksgiving Day on 9 October.

The Canadian edition of the Roman Missal provides collects for celebration on page 952 but they are not to supplant the propers of the Sunday. It is interesting to note that the Prayer Over the Offerings is essentially Eucharistic in its tone, reminding us that as Catholics our true thanksgiving takes place every time we gather to celebrate the Eucharist and Christ’s victory over sin and death.

Recognizing this, it is important that we keep the focus of our preaching on the readings of the day and that any decorations placed in the church do not detract from the primary symbols of the worship space, namely, the assembly, the ambo, the altar, the font and the presider’s chair.

Rather than covering the front of the altar with bales of straw, pumpkins, gourds, corn stalks and wheat sheaves, consider using the foyer/narthex for these displays or consider decorating the front doors of the church so that all in the community might enjoy this display. There is no rule stating that decorations are limited to the inside of the worship space. There are many directives stating that the liturgical furnishings should stand alone.

Allow the altar-table to be prominent and adorned with a cloth, candles and possibly a simple arrangement of flowers.

October 16, 2022

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: Exodus 17:8–13

This passage takes place early in the desert period of the Book of Exodus. The Israelites have escaped from Egypt (Exodus 14–15), have been given quails and manna (Exodus 16), and have received miraculous water from a rock (Exod 17:1–7). It has been a difficult journey thus far, as they have faced hunger, thirst, and lack of morale. In the passage we read today they are beset by a new challenge, the forces of Amalek. This confrontation cements the Israelites' precarious situation. Unlike Amalek's forces, the Israelites do not have an official army; rather, they rely on Moses' strength as a mediator for God's power. When Moses holds up his hand, the Israelites prevail, but when he lowers it, they begin to lose ground. A problem arises when Moses himself begins to tire—what will happen to the Israelites? Have they escaped captivity in Egypt only to be demolished by the Amalekites? Moses sits on a rock, and Aaron and Hur each take an arm and support him in his task of holding up his hands. Through their combined effort, the Israelites manage to defeat the Amalekites. Moses' willingness to be assisted by Aaron and Hur does not diminish his role, but rather serves as an example of the benefits of sharing the demands of leadership.

Psalm: Psalm 121

An affirmation that God the creator also cares for creation and comes to the assistance of those seeking aid.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14–4:2

Paul reminds Timothy that the scriptures are also authoritative resources for him. At this time, “scripture” would have referred to what we now call the “Old Testament,” as the New Testament texts were only in the process of being written and circulated. Paul knows that

the Old Testament scriptures contain sound teachings on the vibrancy of God the creator, moral living, and messianic teachings. The last sentence of today's second reading contains a series of hortatory instructions for Timothy to hold fast to his mission under all circumstances.

Gospel: Luke 18:1–8

The parable Jesus presents about the persistent woman and the unjust judge is an example of a type of argumentation known in Hebrew as *qal wehomer*, “light to heavy.” Essentially, this type of argument is a comparison that functions by making a statement like, “If X is so, then how much more so is Y.” In this case, Jesus describes a familiar situation: a persistent petitioner finally receives the justice she is asking for, even though the judge had no moral compass, nor acknowledgment of God as the source of all truth. Jesus' point is that if the woman could receive justice from someone as morally bankrupt as the unjust judge, then how much more so should we trust that God—the foundation of morality—will attend to justice. Jesus' message is particularly important to remember when it does not seem like one's prayers are being heard. He assures his hearers that God is trustworthy.

Reflection

Today's readings share the theme of persistence in nurturing one's relationship with God, even in the face of obstacles. The readings encourage us to ask ourselves, “what are my obstacles to cultivating a deeper relationship with God?” and “what do I hope for in prayer?” The readings point away from a “vending machine” prayer life, wherein we pray to get something out of God, and suggest that a prayer life that develops a sense of companionship with the Creator of all, with God's only Son, and with the Holy Spirit will nourish and embolden us.

Reflecting the Word in Song

Blest Be the Lord (D. Schutte)

G 437 / GP 31

Bread for the World (B. Farrell)	CIS 6.1 / G 596 / SS 240
Christians, Let Us Love One Another (PICARDY)	CBW 595
How Can I Keep From Singing (R. Lowry)	G 427 / SS 216
Lord Jesus, We Must Know You (ST. THEODULPH)	CBW 517
O God of Earth and Space (LEONI)	CBW 478
Rain Down (J. Cortez)	SS 228
Table of the World (NETTLETON)	CIS 6.30
There is a Longing (A. Quigley)	CIS 6.15 / SS 366
There's a Wideness in God's Mercy (IN BABILONE)	CBW 443
We Walk By Faith (M. Haugen)	CBW 495 / G 414
We Will Follow (D. Brennan et al)	SS 239
With Our God (J.M. Joncas)	CBW 374
With the Lord There is Mercy (R. Modlin)	SS 95

October 23, 2022

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: Sirach 35:15-17, 20-22

The Book of Sirach (or Ben Sira) was written in Hebrew by Yeshua (Joshua) son of Eleazar son of Sira (Sir 50:27) around the year 180 BC. It was later translated by his grandson into Greek, which became the main language of its circulation. Although it is not part of canonical scriptures for Jews it has a revered status, it has always been part of the authoritative scriptures for Christians. The Book of Sirach is part of the wisdom corpus of the Bible, and,

like other wisdom books, it states definitively, “all wisdom is from the Lord” (Sir 1:1).

Today’s passage is a reflection on the dynamics of authentic worship. First, believers should be aware that God “will not show partiality” (35:15). In fact, the verse begins, “do not rely on a dishonest sacrifice; for the Lord is the judge and with him there is no partiality.” Thus, offerings to God should be given honestly, freely, and without ulterior motive. What is more, the Lord regards receives authentic offerings as prayers equally. One’s status in life does not make a person more or less important to God. Thus, Sirach provides examples of the lowliest members of ancient society: the widow and the orphan. Even though they are on the margins of their communities, God will “not ignore” them. As a whole, the reading emphasizes the need for humility in prayer.

Psalm: Psalm 34

Psalm 34 offers praise and expresses confidence in God who hears the prayers of believers.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

This week marks the end of our reading journey through 2 Timothy. Earlier in the letter, Paul encourages Timothy in his ministry, providing guidance and support. In today’s passage, Paul models what the end of a person’s ministry might look like, by demonstrating resilience and trust in God. Through his reflection on his experiences— including the more challenging times— Paul witnesses to the challenging reality of spreading the gospel, doing so without regret or despair.

Gospel: Luke 18:9-14

Sometimes it is worthwhile to consider Jesus’ sense of humour. As he tells his parable featuring the self-centred Pharisee and the despondent and remorseful tax collector, Jesus’ hearers may well have recognized Jesus’ characterizations of these two stock figures of society. The Pharisees, while brilliant interpreters of scripture, did have a reputation

for pomposity and self-assurance. Thus, Jesus' description of him saying, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people...", is not only apt, but also funny in the way it lampoons this group of scriptural know-it-alls.

Jesus' description of the tax collector may be a surprise, but certainly some of the listeners would have thought, "Well good. He should be beating his breast, he is a sinner. Those thieving tax collectors are a menace." What a twist, then, when Jesus reaches the end of the parable: the tax collector's humility "justifies" him, and his humility is what should be imitated. Using the tax collector as a model of piety would come as quite a shock to Jesus' hearers. Tax collectors, since they worked on behalf of the more powerful elite, were perceived as colluding sellouts who injured, rather than contributed to, the community. The "shock value" of this parable—and its humour—makes it memorable, and likely prompts Jesus' hearers contemplate uncomfortable questions of themselves. For example: in what ways do my shortcomings and sins damage my community, my relationship with God, and my sense of self? How can I be like the tax collector in authentically expressing remorse and asking for mercy?

Reflection

Today's readings share a common theme of humility. It is also World Mission Sunday, and the theme for 2022 is "You Shall Be My Witnesses." Together, today's readings and World Mission Sunday challenge us to spread the good news with trust, joy, and humility.

Reflecting the Word in Song

- As We Gather At Your Table (NETTLETON)
CBW 583
- Blest are the Pure in Heart (FRANCONIA)
CBW 471
- Blest Be the Lord (D. Schutte)
G 437 / GP 31
- Change Our Hearts (R. Cooney)
G 285 / GP 39

- Come Back to Me / Hosea (G. Norbet)
G 282
- Holy is His Name (J.M. Talbot)
SS 110
- Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service (IN BABILONE OR BEACH SPRING)
CBW 444
- Loving and Forgiving (S. Soper)
CIS 6.22
- My Soul Gives Glory to the Lord (J.M. Joncas)
CBW 678 / G 14
- Refiner's Fire (B. Doerksen)
SS 160
- The Servant Song (R. Gillard)
G 47
- We Are the Light of the World (J. Greif)
G 353 / SS 237
- You Alone (S. Hart & D. Liles)
SS 365

October 30, 2022

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: Wisdom 11:22-12:2

In this passage from Wisdom (also known as the Wisdom of Solomon) the author reflects on the power of God in contrast to the vulnerability and dependence of creation. Creation is a moral realm, for God's mercy and ability to "overlook people's sins" is an aspect of God's engagement with the cosmos. Just as in Genesis 1, when God creates and calls the elements of creation "good," the author attests that God loves all of creation. Everything that exists does so because God has willed into being, and God would not do so if it were something detestable. The author asserts that God's "immortal spirit" is in all things, and again connects this to morality. Because of sharing God's immortal spirit, God is able to correct people "little by little." As a whole, the passage articulates God's ongoing revelation and engagement with creation.

Psalm: Psalm 145

The psalm unites the twin themes of God's majesty and gracious mercy in an invitation to praise and thank God.

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 1:11–2:2

In Paul's second letter to the Thessalonian community, he provides additional guidance regarding the Parousia (coming) of Christ, which he had mentioned in his first letter (1 Thess 4:15). Although Paul himself was convinced that Jesus' return was imminent, he recognized that new followers of Christ were vulnerable to exploitation in their expectations. That is, while it was important to live a life in preparation for the Parousia, dishonest preachers could easily swindle believers out of their possessions and livelihoods by convincing them that there would soon be no need for property. By the time Paul writes to the Thessalonians a second time, he was aware of the need for strategies for waiting, so that people could learn how to live in the "in between" time—the time after the resurrection and before Christ's return. Accordingly, in this letter, Paul encourages the Thessalonians not to be taken in by people who spread misinformation, including those who try to imitate Paul! Paul wishes to cultivate a balance between authentic moral living, and an ongoing expectation for Christ's return.

Gospel: Luke 19:1–10

Following on the heels of Jesus' parable featuring the smug Pharisee and the repentant Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14) is the humorous story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is a chief tax collector and he is "very rich." The twin details of his occupation and his wealth begin to generate assumptions about his morality, since tax collectors were perceived as dishonest thieves.

In contrast to Zacchaeus' professional life, his name means "pure" or "innocent." The juxtaposition between his name ("pure") and his office (chief tax collector) is ironic, and lends to the story's humour. In addition to being "the innocent tax collector," Zacchaeus is

"short in stature." Thus, despite his occupation and social authority, Zacchaeus has a humble physique and is gentle in name.

Zacchaeus' physical size drives the story forward. Knowing that Jesus is passing through Jericho, Zacchaeus wishes to see him, but cannot because he is too short. He runs ahead of Jesus and climbs a sycamore tree to have a better view. The image of Zacchaeus perched in a tree is laughable, yet it resonates with the prophetic tradition Jesus renews, and looks toward Jesus' self-sacrifice on the cross, when he too will be mounted on a tree. In Amos 7:14, Amos describes himself as a "dresser of sycamore trees," that is, a farmer who cultivates the fruit of the sycamore. However, Amos' inspired mission propelled him to advocate for the poor and to seek justice for those who were oppressed.

To the chagrin of the crowd around him, Jesus tells Zacchaeus to come down, for he intends to stay at his house. Without hesitation, Zacchaeus welcomes to Jesus to his home, and, standing before him (a posture that hints towards the resurrection), Zacchaeus pledges to give away half of everything he owns and to quadruple repayment of any funds he defrauded. Zacchaeus becomes pure in person, not just in name.

Reflection

When we hear the story of Zacchaeus, with whom do we resonate? Are we the bystanders, irritated because Jesus opts to spend time with a sinner? Or do we see ourselves in Zacchaeus—curious, but ready to change? Today's readings offer the reassurance that repentance will be welcomed with compassion. Jesus does not say, "I told you so" or "well it's about time!", but rather welcomes Zacchaeus into his new life of salvation.

Reflecting the Word in Song

Come to the Water (J. Foley)
G 340 / GP 52 / SS 281

The Cry of the Poor (J. Foley)
G 46 / GP 59 / SS 340

Glory and Praise to Our God (D. Schutte)	G 380 / GP 74
Go Make a Difference (S. Angrisano & T. Tomaszek)	SS 213
Go to the World (ENGELBERG)	CBW 508
I Send You Out (J. Angotti)	SS 214
Now Let Us From This Table Rise (DEUS TUORUM MILITUM)	CBW 521
Peace Prayer (J. Foley)	GP 163
Jesus, Lord (R. DeBruyn)	CBW 365
Like a Shepherd (B. Dufford)	CBW 490 / G 251 / GP 125
The Summons (J. Bell)	CIS 6.39 / SS 230
We Are the Light of the World (J. Greif)	G 353 / SS 237
Whatever You Do (W. Jabusch)	G 477

November 6, 2022

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: 2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 7, 9-14

The books of 1 and 2 Maccabees recount events during the Hellenistic (Greek) occupation of Judah. After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, the Greek empire was subdivided into four smaller kingdoms. The Seleucid family gained control of the area including Judah, and by 175 BC, it was ruled by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He was a brutal ruler who sought to eradicate all expressions of Judaism from his kingdom. He forbade the rite of circumcision, desecrated the Temple, outlawed Hebrew as a spoken language, and refused to allow the Jews to worship Yahweh.

Today's passage tells of a woman with seven sons who bravely continue to witness to their faith in the face of persecution. They become martyrs because of their confidence that God would restore them. This is one of the earliest attestations of a belief in bodily restoration after death and resurrection to life. The reading is also an example of a common feature of wisdom literature known as "the two ways." The Woman and her sons choose the way of God, righteousness, and trust, while Antiochus IV Epiphanes represents the way of wickedness and unrighteousness.

Psalm: Psalm 17

A psalm of trust and petition to be with God in God's presence.

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

Paul prays for the comfort of the Thessalonian community and encourages them to trust in the Lord. He is confident that the Lord will protect him and the Thessalonians from "the evil one." Paul's notion of "the evil one" personifies evil and reflects the apocalyptic thinking that Paul is known for. In apocalyptic literature, evil frequently takes monstrous, cosmic forms that are opposed to the forces of good led by God. Paul exhorts the community to trust in God, for "the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one."

Gospel: Luke 20:27-38

The Sadducees were a priestly class who were intimately involved with the functioning of the Temple in Jerusalem. Since they were primarily concerned with the proper performance of Temple rituals, their primary focus, scripturally, was on the Five Books of Moses, or Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). They regarded these five books as authoritative, and the other Hebrew writings such as the prophets, Psalms, and wisdom texts, were important, but not authoritative. Thus, the Sadducees only regarded what was in the Five Books of Moses as true and binding.

This background is important for understanding Jesus' exchange with the Sadducees, because they maintained that the Five Books of Moses do not have any reference to resurrection. Therefore, unlike the Pharisees who regarded all of the Hebrew texts aforementioned as authoritative, the Sadducees did not accept resurrection of the dead as a valid belief, because, on the surface of things, there is no reference to resurrection in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy. Armed with this information, they try to outsmart Jesus in a question about the resurrection in order to force him to admit that it is a preposterous idea. They invent a scenario wherein a woman has seven husbands, but eventually dies, having borne no children. They want to know, "whose wife will the woman be?—for the seven had married her."

In response, Jesus demonstrates his own ability to interpret the scriptures. Answering Sadducees he makes reference to Exodus 3:6, when God says to Moses, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Jesus' point is that the tense that God uses to refer to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the present tense! Since God would not make a mistake, nor would the inspired author, it must mean that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though they passed away, are somehow alive. We do not hear the Sadducees' reaction, but it is clear that Jesus manages to avoid their scriptural trap, while also teaching about the characteristics of the resurrection.

Reflection

Today's readings prompt us to ponder the mystery of the resurrection. Jesus' statement that the righteous who die "cannot die anymore because they are like Angels and are sons and daughters of God, being children of the resurrection" points to a dynamism in the resurrection, a flourishing new stage of being that we are invited to participate in through striving to live a life of compassion, righteousness, and trust in God.

Reflecting the Word in Song

Come to the Water (J. Foley)	G 340 / GP 52 / SS 281
The Cry of the Poor (J. Foley)	G46 / GP 59 / SS 340
Glory and Praise to Our God (D. Schutte)	G 380 / GP 74
Go Make a Difference (S. Angrisano & T. Tomaszek)	SS 213
Go to the World (ENGELBERG)	CBW 508
I Send You Out (J. Angotti)	SS 214
Now Let Us From This Table Rise (DEUS TUORUM MILITUM)	CBW 521
Peace Prayer (J. Foley)	GP 163
Jesus, Lord (R. DeBruyn)	CBW 365
Like a Shepherd (B. Dufford)	CBW 490 / G 251 / GP 125
The Summons (J. Bell)	CIS 6.39 / SS 230
We Are the Light of the World (J. Greif)	G 353 / SS 237
Whatsoever You Do (W. Jabusch)	G 477

November 13, 2022

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: Malachi 4:1-2

The Book of Malachi is the final book of the Twelve Minor prophets in the Old Testament, and in the Christian canons, Malachi is the final book before the New Testament. The name "Malachi" means, "my messenger," and it is likely a title rather than a personal name (see Mal 3:1). The Book of Malachi dates to the

Persian Period (538–333 BC), a time when the Jews were home, but not free. The Persian occupation of Judah entailed heavy taxation and paralyzing surveillance of the people. The Book of Malachi demonstrates some of the literary coping mechanisms of an occupied people. The prophet speaks of a future when the Lord will mete out justice, punishing the wicked and restoring the righteous.

Psalm: Psalm 98

Psalm 98 celebrates God as king of all creation. The personified elements of the world join in acclaiming the arrival of the God the king.

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

As we have seen in previous weeks, Paul instructs the Thessalonians on how to be good “waiters” for the coming of Christ. This has implications not only for the theological concerns of the people, but also for the practical, day-to-day ways of living. In anticipation of the imminent return of Christ, it appears that some members of the community had stopped working, relying on others for their sustenance and other daily needs. For Paul, and likely for many in the community, this was not acceptable. Paul uses his own way of life as an example, pointing out that even while he was among them, he supported himself and was not idle. Paul insists that each person should continue to work and earn their own living. It is important to note that his advice is directed to those who are perfectly able to work and have chosen not to out of misguided assumptions regarding the Parousia. For Paul, proper waiting means living a life of holiness in the midst of one’s normal daily activities.

Gospel: Luke 21:5-19

As Jesus nears his arrest, passion, and crucifixion, his teachings become more eschatological in tone. As in other apocalyptic texts, Jesus envisions a time of great civil upheaval and cataclysmic natural events. A common feature of apocalyptic texts is a convoluted narrative timeline. Hence, Jesus describes the demolition of the Temple,

nations pitted against nations, and natural disasters before doubling back to describe how his followers will be arrested and persecuted because of his name. Notice how the description of this period as an “opportunity to testify” is sandwiched between predictions of persecution by social and religious authorities on the one hand, and familial and community structures on the other. This emphasizes both the extent of the rejection Jesus’ believers should anticipate, and how they should conduct themselves. Jesus does not instruct them to fight back, flee, or pretend they are not his followers. Rather, he tells them it is an opportunity to testify with words and wisdom he will supply at the time. Accepting Jesus’ message requires profound trust and hope.

Reflection

What characterizes “good waiting”? Today’s readings suggest that waiting in Christ means to continue to perform one’s daily tasks, and to trust that the spirit of Christ will embolden believers to witness to the paschal mystery even in dire circumstances. Since authentic faith is so important in these readings, we might take the opportunity to ask ourselves: what challenges our faith in Jesus? Why do these things cause us consternation? What would help us to overcome these obstacles to belief?

Reflecting the Word in Song

Be Not Afraid (B. Dufford)	CBW 481 / G 430 / GP 24 / SS 271
Forth in the Peace of Christ We Go (LLEDROD)	CBW 514
Go Make of All Disciples (ELLACOMBE)	CIS 6.28
Glorious in Majesty (SHIBBOLET BASADEH)	G 478
God of Day and God of Darkness (BEACH SPRING)	CBW 477 / G 551
How Great Thou Art (S. Hine)	CBW 554
I Will Choose Christ (T. Booth)	SS 220

In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful (J. Berthier/Taizé)	G 396
Jesus, Lord (R. DeBruyn)	CBW 365
O Christ, the Great Foundation (AURELIA)	CBW 527
O Day of God (FRANCONIA)	CBW 586
Though the Mountains May Fall (D. Schutte)	G 426 / GP 214
The Voice of God (FLENTGE OF WOODLANDS)	CBW 433G 477

November 20, 2022

Christ the King, C

Breaking Open the Word

First Reading: 2 Samuel 5:1-3

David's ascension to the kingship of Israel was anything but straightforward. He was anointed as king by Samuel in 1 Samuel 16 while Saul was still the living king of the nation. According to 1 Samuel, David and Saul had a complicated relationship; on the one hand, Saul relied on David and wanted him near to him—so near that he arranged for his daughter to marry David. On the other hand, Saul was very insecure regarding David's popularity, and he tried on more than one occasion to kill David.

In contrast, the historical books portray David as a model of Yahwistic faith. Even though he was anointed, he recognized that Saul, too, had been chosen as God's anointed king (1 Samuel 9-10), and because of this, David refused to deliberately injure Saul. Thus, rather than claiming Saul's title through a battle, David simply waited until the House of Saul gradually weakened following Saul's death.

In today's reading we hear how the ten northern tribes of Israel approach David and acclaim him king. They tell him that even while Saul was king, David "led out Israel and

brought it in." This is a reference to leadership in battle against other nations, but it also connects to David's original occupation as a shepherd. The people look to David for leadership and safety, and David becomes Israel's most revered king without having had to subdue the people with violence.

Psalm: Psalm 122

A joyful psalm of praise celebrating the Lord, the Temple in Jerusalem, and the Davidic monarchy.

Second Reading: Colossians 1:12-20

This passage, known as the "Christ Hymn of Colossians," expresses the metaphysical implications of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Since only a fully righteous person could inaugurate the resurrection, and since a fully righteous person would be fully at one with God, the author of the hymn intuits that Jesus reveals God to the world. "Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation...Christ is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col 1:15, 16).

The hymn describes Christ as the head of the body, which is the Church. In this way the author of the hymn draws from imagery typically used of the patriarchal structure of Greco-Roman households, and particularly the Emperor's persona and household. This would be a powerful way to convey the notion that, just as the reality of the Empire is embodied both by the Empire itself and also by the Emperor the pater familias, Christ as the head of the Church both is the Church and leads the Church. The hymn strives to attribute to Christ the maximum characteristics of grandeur.

Gospel: Luke 23:35-43

The liturgical year comes to a close with Jesus' agonizing crucifixion. Jesus, who so frequently preached the coming of the Kingdom of God, is mocked by the soldiers and by the inscription above him. Both the leaders and one of the two men crucified with Jesus try to provoke Jesus to save himself. The crucified man also adds, "and us!". It is worthwhile to note that one of the Emperor's regnal titles was *Soter*,

“Saviour.” Thus, the mocking detractors cruelly contrast Jesus’ helplessness with the Emperor’s might.

The other crucified man exemplifies the type of testifying essential for salvation that Jesus spoke about last week. In the midst of intense physical suffering and persecution, the second man witnesses to Jesus’ innocence, expresses his own guilt, and pleads for Jesus to remember him. In response, Jesus acts in total sovereignty, promising the man he would join him in Paradise. Not even the Emperor could promise such a gift.

Reflection

The grandeur of today’s feast is tempered by the vulnerability of Jesus’ passion and crucifixion. Jesus’ total trusting commitment to the will of God and the reign of God meant that he would not capitulate under duress. To do so would be to admit that the Emperor was more powerful. Rather, Jesus remains at one with God, even during intense physical and emotional pain. We are challenged to not look away from Jesus’ vulnerability, because it is an essential part of his kingship. It is also part of what we are called to imitate in our lives as Christians. Can we spread the good news in vulnerability?

Reflecting the Word in Song

All the Ends of the Earth (B. Dufford)

G 378 / GP 7

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus (HYFRYDOL)	CBW 426
At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing (SALZBURG)	CBW 375
Christ is the King (GELOBT SEI GOTT)	CBW 387
Christ the Lord (S. Hart & R. Feduccia)	SS 194
Christ, Our King Before Creation (S. Chavez-Melo)	CBW 499
Crown Him With Many Crowns (DIADEMATA)	CBW 437
Forth in the Peace of Christ We Go (LLEDROD)	CBW 514
Jesus, the Lord (R. O’Connor)	CBW 432 / G 304 / GP 111
Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (LAUDA ANIMA)	CBW 565
Shout to the Lord (D. Zschech)	SS 350
To Jesus Christ, Our Sovereign King (ICH GLAUB AN GOTT)	CBW 438
What Wondrous Love is This (WONDROUS LOVE)	G 295 / SS 364
You Are the Way (NICOLAUS)	CBW 441

Credits:

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