

Daily Prayer

Feria

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we hold in our prayers the ordinary moments in life—the trials and the joys.

We begin by saying

Because I live, you will live also; you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

John 14.19-20

The First Reading

This “King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him; and to him Abraham apportioned “one-tenth of everything. His name, in the first place, means “king of righteousness”; next he is also king of Salem, that is, “king of peace.” Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

It is even more obvious when another priest arises, resembling Melchizedek, one who has become a priest, not through a legal requirement concerning physical descent, but through the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested of him, You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Hebrews 7.1-3, 15-17

The Psalm

The Lord said to my lord, "Sit at my right hand, *
until I make your enemies your footstool"

The Lord will send the sceptre of your power out of Zion, *
saying, "Rule over your enemies round about you.

Princely state has been yours from the day of your birth, *
in the beauty of holiness have I begotten you,
like dew from the womb of the morning."

The Lord has sworn and he will not recant: *

"You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

The Lord who is at your right hand
will smite kings in the day of his wrath; *
he will rule over the nations.

He will heap high the corpses; *
he will smash heads over the wide earth.

He will drink from the brook beside the road; *
therefore he will lift high his head.

Psalm 110

The Gospel Reading

Again, Jesus entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. The Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." Then he said to them, "is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.'" He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and

immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Mark 3.1-6

We continue with the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the reading has to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

The Reflection

Katy Waugh

“They watched him to see if he would cure the man on the sabbath.” ~Mark 3.2

One of the things I have always loved about these mid week preaching gigs is being asked to create a thoughtful piece based on the lessons assigned for the day as found in the Daily Lectionary. Sometimes, I laugh right out loud when I come across words that echo my recent experience of that very week. Sometimes a passage which is very dear to my heart appears and I have to become a strict editor. At other times, I tackle words that are my least favourite passages and I find myself digging for historical perspectives that will give me new understanding of the passage, or new ammunition for dismissing the passage completely. It helps me to remind myself that gospel means good news. So, where is the good news in today's story which tells of Jesus encountering a man with a withered hand as he entered a synagogue and is challenged by the elders, the Pharisees?

On one level it is a wonderful story of a healing miracle. So our response is one of gratitude and wonder at the power of God to come into our lives and heal our open wounds. But, then we hear the criticism of the Pharisees, the much maligned law-abiders whose role in life seems to be to interpret the ancient Judaic laws in the strictest way possible.

We read “They watched to see if he would cure him on the sabbath.” The man seems to be suffering from a withered hand, so

Jesus asks him to stretch out his arm and performs a miracle. The only problem lies in the fact that these events take place on the sabbath, the day of the week marked off as a day in which observant Jews were to do no work. Thus, Jesus is, in their eyes a law breaker... Miracle worker or law breaker??

Fortunately for you and me we don't have to lie awake at night worrying about these weighty issues. But it does make me think—think about obeying the laws, healing miracles and lots of other things.

Need I remind you that we are in the tenth month of a pandemic where we are waiting on baited breath for a healing miracle while at the same time being asked again and again to follow the laws that keep appearing on a daily basis. I come from a legal family so obeying the law is in my DNA, so I am not suggesting we break or even bend the rules of the current lockdown. But, I am also open to healing miracles whether they be in the form of the coming vaccines or in the daily acts of bravery, generosity, creativity that we are all witnessing in our own lives. I find it very reassuring that as in Jesus' time, God is always thinking bigger than I am and somehow reconciling all things.

That's the other joy of being the weekly preacher. I don't have to have all the answers. My role is to open up possibilities and let God do the real work of teaching us understanding. As long as we do not succumb to either or ways of thinking, God can always surprise us. Mary Oliver, my favourite poet, says it this way.

The World I Live In

I have refused to live
locked in the orderly house of
reasons and proofs.
The world I live in and believe in

is wider than that. And anyway,
what's wrong with Maybe?

You wouldn't believe what once or
twice I have seen. I'll just
tell you this:
only if there are angels in your head will you
ever, possibly, see one.

When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle

The Canticle ~ The Souls of the Righteous

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God; *
no torment shall ever touch them.

In the eyes of the unwise they seemed to be dead, *
their departure was taken for defeat,
their going from us to be disaster; *
but they are in peace.

Though they appeared to be punished *
their hope is rich in immortality.

Small their affliction, great their blessing; *
God proved and found them worthy of himself.

Like gold in a furnace he tried them, *
and accepted them as an oblation.

In the moment of God's coming
they shall kindle into flame *
and run like sparks through the stubble.

They shall govern nations and peoples, *
and the Lord shall be their ruler for ever.

Wisdom 3.1-8

We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions) and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.

The Intercessions

Let us pray to God,
who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus,
through illness or isolation or anxiety,
that they may find relief and recovery:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

For those who are guiding our nation at this time,
and shaping national policies,
that they may make wise decisions:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers,
that through their skill and insights
many will be restored to health:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

For the vulnerable and the fearful,
for the gravely ill and the dying,
that they may know your comfort and peace:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our prayers conclude

Almighty God,
your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
is the light of the world.
May your people,
illuminated by your word and sacraments,
shine with the radiance of his glory,
that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed
to the ends of the earth;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

We conclude

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
shine in our hearts and fill our lives
with his joy and peace.

Credits:

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The Intercessions: Church of England: Coronavirus Resources www.churchofengland.org

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The Concluding Sentence: Common Worship: Times and Seasons—Epiphany (adapted). © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

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