

Daily Prayer

Feria

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

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

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

My trust is in you, O Lord.

I have said, 'You are my God.'

The First Reading

Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in; so they brought those men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?'

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defence to you in this matter. If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us

from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.'

Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace to be heated up seven times more than was customary, and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. Because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counsellors, 'Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?' They answered the king, 'True, O king.' He replied, 'But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has the appearance of a god.' Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said, 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!' So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counsellors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics were not harmed, and not even the smell of fire came from them. Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and

delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

Daniel 3.13-28

The Psalm

The earth is the Lord's and all that fills it, ♦
the compass of the world and all who dwell therein.

For he has founded it upon the seas ♦
and set it firm upon the rivers of the deep.

'Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, ♦
or who can rise up in his holy place?'

'Those who have clean hands and a pure heart, ♦
who have not lifted up their soul to an idol,
nor sworn an oath to a lie;

'They shall receive a blessing from the Lord, ♦
a just reward from the God of their salvation.'

Such is the company of those who seek him, ♦
of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

Psalm 24.1-6

The Gospel Reading

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' They answered him, 'We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, "You will be made free"?''

Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in

the household; the son has a place there for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word. I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father.'

They answered him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are indeed doing what your father does.' They said to him, 'We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself.' Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God.'

John 8.31-47

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

The Rev'd Susan Haig

The Slavery of Sin and the Freedom of Love
(*Jn 8:31-47; Dan 3:13-28*)

No one wants to be a slave. All of us long to be free. And many of us like me enjoy the privilege of having no life experience of the trauma and degradation of slavery. And so all that I write here comes from this place of privilege, this land of metaphor. But I do understand what it is to be enslaved in the spiritual and psychological aspects of my human existence. Because, as John writes: “everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.”

We are, therefore, all slaves. Our bondage lies in our propensity to refuse to live as God lives. We refuse to love as God loves. Instead we try to grab and control life for our own sakes, rather than for the sake of our Beloved God and Her beloved children.

But lest we despair, the evangelist records that Jesus instructs those who believe in him – which is to say, those who love him – that if they follow him and continue in his teachings, they will know the truth and this truth will set them free. Emancipation is ours if we give our hearts and minds and wills to Jesus, having admitted the truth about ourselves and our failings.

The theme of enslavement is explored in Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. The people of Middle Earth pin their hopes for liberation on their assumption that Sauron, the dark Lord, cannot imagine for a moment that they would attempt to destroy the ring rather than learn its secrets and use it against him. His downfall will be that there is a group of companions who work together to give up power and dominion and all that goes with it, even though they are sorely tempted by it along the way. Eventually, a pure one, a Hobbit, triumphs over evil because his essence and actions are rooted and grounded in love.

God's way of overcoming our bondage is very similar. In Jesus God enters into it, consenting to have his flesh scraped raw by shackles. In Jesus God endures the angst of alienation, the burden of suffering, and even the death, all marks of our human bondage. In Jesus God gives up power and dominion and all that goes with it, even though he is sorely tempted along the way to grab it back. By opening himself to the depths and heights and breadths of our bondage, Jesus, the pure one, emerges on the other side, a new creation. Jesus can do this for us because his love knows no end and no beginning. Because he loves his Abba and his loyalty never wavers.

This kind of love always sets us free, but it may also put us on a cross, or into a fiery furnace. The Old Testament lesson from the Book of Daniel tells the story of three brave men who refused to step aside from their love for Yahweh even if it were to cost them their lives. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to acquiesce to King Nebuchadnezzar's demand to fall down and worship the golden statute he had set up because to do so would be turning their backs on love. Their lives, as well as their love and loyalty, belonged to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that was that. There was no room in their hearts or their lives for another god.

In their case the sin was obvious, as was the enemy and the temptation. But in most of life, the enemy and the temptation to sin are much more subtle. Our Nebuchadnezzars are cloaked and masked, though still every bit as omnipresent and beguiling. But we have been living in Babylon for so long that it takes a great deal of mindfulness and careful discernment to recognize the foreign and false gods those in authority have set up for us. They may not even seem like gods, but simply the everyday realities of our modern lives. But if we are paying attention we will recognize their presence and power, perhaps as we start to feel queasy about our choices or a

ball of fear begins to grow inside of us. If the direction in which we are being pulled takes us away from our centre, from our sense of home and belonging, from the promises we made in our baptisms, then the road we are travelling is one of slavery, not one of freedom. The precious freedom which has been won for us by the God of flesh and blood who travels with us- even into the fiery furnace - not a god of gold wondrously wrought, watching from its high and mighty pedestal.

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

The Canticle ~ Bless the Lord

Blessed are you, the God of our ancestors, ♦
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed is your holy and glorious name, ♦
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you, in your holy and glorious temple, ♦
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you who look into the depths, ♦
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you, enthroned on the cherubim, ♦
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom, ♦
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you in the heights of heaven, ♦
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

The Song of the Three 29-34

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

With faith and love and in union with Christ,
let us offer our prayer before the throne of grace.
Have mercy on your people,
for whom your Son laid down his life:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Bring healing and wholeness to people and nations,
and have pity on those torn apart by division:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Strengthen all who are persecuted for your name's sake,
and deliver them from evil:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Look in mercy upon all who suffer,
and hear those who cry out in pain and desolation:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Bring comfort to the dying,
and gladden their hearts with the vision of your glory:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Give rest to the departed
and bring them, with your saints, to glory everlasting:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us commend the world, for which Christ died,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Amen.

Our prayers conclude

God of all,
whose Son Jesus Christ
walked the path of suffering love to the end,

renew our spirits as we prepare to walk with him over the days that lie ahead.

Give us seriousness of intent,
give us compassion of heart
and give us openness of mind,
that all we hear, do and say
may transform our souls and reinvigorate our lives,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[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 Christ our Saviour give us peace.

Amen.

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The Concluding Sentence: Common Worship: Daily Prayer © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

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