

This Weeks Readings

The Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday, August 8, 2010

First Reading

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

The book of Isaiah is expansive, dealing with virtually everything that is involved in being a people of God on this planet Earth. The impressive art of Isaiah involves taking the stuff of our ordinary and often disappointing human experience and showing us how it is the very stuff that God uses to create and save and give hope. As this vast panorama opens up before us, it turns out that nothing is unusable by God. He uses everybody as material for his work, which is the remaking of the mess we have made of our lives. The prominent themes repeated and developed are judgment, comfort, and hope.

Isaiah is without doubt the greatest of Israel's prophets. He survived through one of the stormiest periods of Judean history (circa 745-700 BC). He was so highly regarded nearly two centuries later that the work of another group of anonymous prophesies were added to his and now appear in chapters 40-66. Although believed to belong to the royal court, he vehemently condemned the injustices of his time. In this passage he thundered against the ruling classes, likening them to the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah. His message presented God's claim for social justice rather than elaborate rituals and sacrifices.

All sit.

A Reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now, let us argue it out," says the Lord: "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Reader Here ends the Reading.

Remain seated.

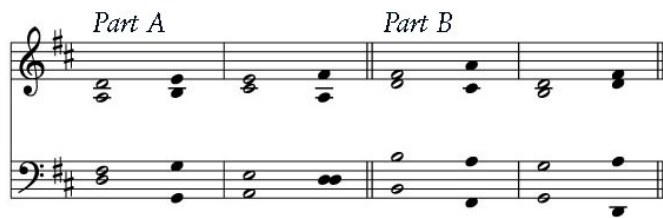
Psalms 50:1-8, 23-24

Deus deorum

Psalms is a collection of collections. The psalms were written over many centuries, stretching from the days of Solomon's temple (about 950 BC) to after the Exile (about 350 BC.) Psalms are of five types: hymns of praise, laments, thanksgiving psalms, royal psalms, and wisdom psalms.

This psalm stands in the tradition of the great prophets like Isaiah. It even repeats some of the same phrases as Isaiah's condemnation of unworthy rituals, but offers an antidote in sincere prayers of thanksgiving.

The earliest examples of “Anglican Chant” are single chants dating from the latter part of the 16th century. They were written by Thomas Tallis and his contemporaries, devised to provide a suitable musical setting for the Psalms, as published in the Book of Common Prayer. The elipses [...] are a direction to pause.



- 1 The Lord the God of gods has | spoken; *
he has called the earth from the rising of the sun to
its | setting.
- 2 Out of Zion perfect in its | beauty *
God reveals himself in | glory.
- 3 Our God will come and will not keep | silence; *
before him there is a consuming flame ...
and round about him a raging | storm.
- 4 He calls the heavens and the earth from | above *
to witness the judgment of his | people.
- 5 “Gather before me my loyal | followers *
those who have made a covenant with me
and sealed it with | sacrifice.”
- 6 Let the heavens declare the rightness of his | cause; *
for God himself is | judge.
- 7 Hear O my people and I will speak: ...
“O Israel I will bear witness a- | gainst you; *
for I am God your | God.
- 8 I do not accuse you because of your | sacrifices; *
your offerings are always be- | fore me.
- 23 Consider this well you who forget | God *
lest I rend you and there be none to de- | liver you.
- 24 Whoever offers me the sacrifice of thanksgiving | honors me; *
but to those who keep in my way will I show the salvation of | God.”

Second Reading

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Apart from the concluding verses (which may have been added later), this book is a treatise (or sermon) rather than a letter. Its name comes from its approach to Christianity: it is couched in Judaic terms. The identity of the author is unknown; Origen, c. 200 said that “only God knows” who wrote Hebrews. The book presents an elaborate analysis, arguing for the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Christ as revealer and mediator of God’s grace. Basing his argument on the Old Testament, the author argues for the superiority of Christ to the prophets, angels and Moses. Christ offers a superior priesthood, and his sacrifice is much more significant than that of Levite priests. Jesus is the “heavenly” high priest, making the true sacrifice for the sins of the people, but he is also of the same flesh and blood as those he makes holy.

This passage celebrates faith and those who have shown themselves to be some of Israel’s greatest faith-heroes. After giving what is for many a somewhat confusing definition of faith, it turns to show how faith had resulted in action by Israel’s great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

A Reading from Paul's letter to the Hebrews.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.” All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

Reader Here ends the Reading.

Holy Gospel

Luke 12:32-40

Three gospels in the New Testament offer similar portraits of the life of Jesus; Luke is the latest of them. Its author, traditionally Luke the physician who accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys, draws on three sources: Mark (via Matthew), a collection of sayings (known as Q for Quelle, German for source), and his own source. It is a gospel that emphasizes God's love for the poor, the disadvantaged, minorities, outcasts, sinners and lepers. Women play a more prominent part than in the other gospels. Luke never uses Semitic words; this is one argument for thinking that he wrote primarily for Gentiles.

The early church believed in the return of Christ at some unknown but imminent time. This passage seems to fit into that tradition. We can find similar elements of it in different contexts both Matthew and Mark (vss. 33-34 = Matthew 6:19-21; vss. 35-40 = Mark 13:33-37). This reveals that a common tradition existed about the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. He came to inaugurate God's reign of love in human affairs and would soon return to accomplish this for all eternity.

All stand.

Priest The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.
People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Jesus said to his disciples, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. “But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Priest The Gospel of the Lord.
People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

This Weeks Readings

The 15TH Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday, August 15, 2010

First Reading

Isaiah 5:1-7

The book of Isaiah is expansive, dealing with virtually everything that is involved in being a people of God on this planet Earth. The impressive art of Isaiah involves taking the stuff of our ordinary and often disappointing human experience and showing us how it is the very stuff that God uses to create and save and give hope. As this vast panorama opens up before us, it turns out that nothing is unusable by God. He uses everybody as material for his work, which is the remaking of the mess we have made of our lives. The prominent themes repeated and developed are judgment, comfort, and hope.

Israel and Judah, the northern and southern kingdoms resulting from the breakup of the united kingdom of David and Solomon, were being threatened by advancing Assyrian armies circa 722 BC. Isaiah saw this threat as God's judgment for the injustice and apostasy of God's people. This lyrical poem described them as a vineyard that failed to produce good fruit and so had to be destroyed.

All sit.

A Reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!

Reader Here ends the Reading.

Remain seated.

Psalm 80

Qui regis Israel

Psalms is a collection of collections. The psalms were written over many centuries, stretching from the days of Solomon's temple (about 950 BC) to after the Exile (about 350 BC.) Psalms are of five types: hymns of praise, laments, thanksgiving psalms, royal psalms, and wisdom psalms.

This prayer pleads for God to save Israel from destruction as a shepherd protects his sheep. Then Israel is likened to a vine that had been brought from Egypt, prospered in a new land, but now was about to be destroyed.

The earliest examples of “Anglican Chant” are single chants dating from the latter part of the 16th century. They were written by Thomas Tallis and his contemporaries, devised to provide a suitable musical setting for the Psalms, as published in the Book of Common Prayer. The elipses [...] are a direction to pause.



- 1 Hear O Shepherd of Israel ...
leading Joseph like a | flock; *
shine forth you that are enthroned upon the | cherubim.
- 2 In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Man- | asseh *
stir up your strength and come to | help us.
- 8 You have brought a vine out of | Egypt; *
you cast out the nations and | planted it.
- 9 You prepared the | ground for it; *
it took root and filled the | land.
- 10 The mountains were covered by its | shadow *
and the towering cedar trees by its | boughs.
- 11 You stretched out its tendrils to the | Sea *
and its branches to the | River.
- 12 Why have you broken down its | wall *
so that all who pass by pluck off its | grapes?
- 13 The wild boar of the forest has | ravaged it *
and the beasts of the field have grazed up- | on it.
- 14 Turn now O God of hosts ...
look down from heaven; ...
behold and tend this | vine; *
preserve what your right hand has | planted.
- 15 They burn it with fire like | rubbish; *
at the rebuke of your countenance let them | perish.
- 16 Let your hand be upon the man of your | right hand *
the son of man you have made so strong for your- | self.
- 17 And so will we never turn a- | way from you; *
give us life that we may call upon your | Name.

Repeat Chant Part B

- 18 Restore us O Lord God of | hosts; *
show the light of your countenance and we shall be | saved.

Second Reading

Hebrews 11:29—12:2

Apart from the concluding verses (which may have been added later), this book is a treatise (or sermon) rather than a letter. Its name comes from its approach to Christianity: it is couched in Judaic terms. The identity of the author is unknown; Origen, c. 200 said that “only God knows” who wrote Hebrews. The book presents an elaborate analysis, arguing for the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Christ as revealer and mediator of God’s grace. Basing his argument on the Old Testament, the author argues for the superiority of Christ to the prophets, angels and Moses. Christ offers a superior priesthood, and his sacrifice is much more significant than that of Levite priests. Jesus is the “heavenly” high priest, making the true sacrifice for the sins of the people, but he is also of the same flesh and blood as those he makes holy.

This passage recalls more of Israel’s religious heroes and describes how they suffered because of their faith. Then it gives the reason for this recital of their heroic endurance. We too may join them in following the example of the greatest of all, Jesus, who suffered death on the cross and now reigns with God.

A Reading from Paul’s letter to the Hebrews.

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace. What more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Reader Here ends the Reading.

Holy Gospel

Luke 12:49-56

Three gospels in the New Testament offer similar portraits of the life of Jesus; Luke is the latest of them. Its author, traditionally Luke the physician who accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys, draws on three sources: Mark (via Matthew), a collection of sayings (known as Q for Quelle, German for source), and his own source. It is a gospel that emphasizes God’s love for the poor, the disadvantaged, minorities, outcasts, sinners and lepers. Women play a more prominent part than in the other gospels. Luke never uses Semitic words; this is one argument for thinking that he wrote primarily for Gentiles.

This apocalyptic vision of conflict about what Jesus means presents us with a picture of what may have actually happened in the community for which Luke was writing his gospel in the second last decade of the 1st century. Confronted by Jews who had expelled all Christians from their synagogues and threatened with persecution by the Romans, it would have been natural for them to seek a deeper understanding of what was happening to them in the Jewish traditions about the end of time and the teachings of Jesus himself. No one can tell how much of these words were actually spoken by Jesus or created by Luke for his audience.

All stand.

Priest The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.
People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Jesus said, "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, 'It is going to rain'; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

Priest The Gospel of the Lord.
People Praise to you, Lord Christ.