

SEPTUAGESIMA (prelent-1)

Hymns: 380, 447, 453, 370

The INTROIT

(Ps.18:4,5,6:18:1,2)

- P: The sorrows of death compassed me;*
C: the sorrows of hell compassed me about.
P: In my distress I called upon the Lord;
C: and He heard my voice out of His temple.
P: I will love Thee, O Lord, my Strength;
C: the Lord is my Rock and my Fortress.

The COLLECT

O Lord, we beseech Thee favorably to hear the prayers of Thy people that we, who are justly punished for our offenses, may be mercifully delivered by Thy goodness, for the glory of Thy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Savior, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end,

The FIRST LESSON

Jeremiah 1:4-10 (NKJV)

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

Then said I: “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.”

But the LORD said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,” says the LORD. Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant.”

The GRADUAL

(Ps.9:9-10;18-19a)

- P: The Lord will be a Refuge for the oppressed, a Refuge in times of trouble: and they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.*
C: For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail.

The EPISTLE

1 Corinthians 9:24- 10:5 (NKJV)

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

The TRACT

(from Ps.130:1-4)

P: Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice.

C: Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

P: If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

C: But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Matthew 20:1-16 (NKJV)

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you." So they went.

Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?"

They said to him, "Because no one hired us."

He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive." So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, "Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first."

And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, "These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day."

But he answered one of them and said, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?"

So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.

1 Corinthians 9:24- 10:5 — “Do You’all Not Know”

INTRODUCTION

I. DO YOU’ALL NOT KNOW

II. IN THIS WAY YOU’ALL MUST TREK

III. I TRULY NOW TREK IN THIS WAY

CONCLUSION - All were baptized, all ate and drank of Christ

Overtake/overcome/obtain/comprehend

Romans 9:31

John 1:15

Philippians 3:12-13

1 Thessalonians 5:4

1 Corinthians 9:24- 10:5 — “Do You’ all Not Know”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Today is Septuagesima. The Epistle appointed for this day is 1 Corinthians 9:24 - 10:5:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

In preparing for this day, some points of the dear apostle became more obvious to me than I have previously noticed. I continue to be amazed as I become more and more aware of the continuity of his theme of the Holy Communion of God in Christ Jesus restored to us in His body. How easily we become selfish in our thinking as Christians, thinking that being a Christian is about self. The truth is, as St. Paul wonderfully teaches in this Epistle, that the Christian faith is not concerning us and what we do, but what we do flows from the oneness of the Christian faith as it is manifested in the oneness of God’s Holy Communion. Thus as the dear apostle writes to the Ephesians:

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4:4-7)

Let us now hear from today’s Epistle reading how the apostle teaches this again in our text.

I. DO YOU’ ALL NOT KNOW

Our text begins with the apostle asking his dearly beloved brothers and sisters in Corinth, **“Do you’ all not continue to know that those in a stadium trekking all trek, but one receives the umpire’s judgment?”**

St. Paul is not writing to individuals. None of the Scriptures are written for individuals. They are written for the Church, the communion of the saints. Thus, St. Paul does not begin by saying, **“Does not each person”** but **“Do you’all not . . .”** This is the theme of the entire Epistle to the Corinthians. They had forgotten their true identity that they received together in Christ Jesus. They had begun to act as though the life of a Christian is an individual trek of faith rather than the trek of the entire body of Christ. They had begun to live as though faith were the action of individuals who merely gathered on account of God’s decree.

Therefore, St. Paul says, **“Do you’all not continue to know?”** This knowledge is a continuing knowledge, established once and for all through Holy Baptism. This knowledge is given to each individual who is baptized into Christ Jesus. With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the fullness of God’s grace is given and the knowledge of being reconciled to God in Christ in His body is born in the person. By Baptism God makes us one again in His Holy Communion. As one with Him we hear His singular judgement for us all.

St. Paul points to the secular races that were world-known in Corinth. The word that we often translate as run is *trecho*, from which we have the word *trek*. St. Paul is not speaking merely of the day of the race when the actual running is taking place in competition against all others. He is speaking of the entire trek that begins with slow and arduous training and preparation, a trek that ends with the umpire’s final judgment. The day of the race is the last few steps in that trek.

The point of this is that in a stadium full of runners, all trek toward the final judgment, and only one receives the umpire’s judgment of victory. Only One. Now, we need to remember who that One is. His name is Jesus. He is the only one who will ever win the Judgment of Victory. All others fall short. Thus St. Paul asks, **“Do you’all not continue to know that those in a stadium trekking all trek, but one receives the umpire’s judgment?”**

II. IN THIS WAY YOU’ALL MUST TREK

Then the dear apostle presses us to remember the trek that we share together by which we all, as one in Christ, receive His victorious judgment.

In this way you’all must trek in order to overcome.

How foolishly selfish we are we do not even realize. No one comes to the Father except by Jesus, yet having received the Way to the Father, we imagine that we do it on our own. There is only One Way. We all are baptized into this One. Yet we act as though this faith were our own faith and that this victory were our own victory. None of us can say, **“This is mine own!”** Rather we must confess, **“God be merciful to me, a sinner.”**

This is when we realize that we truly are one with all the rest of the world. This is when we recognize the fullness of our need for salvation that comes only through the merits of Jesus. This is when we stop imagining that sanctification is something that we do. This is when we stop thinking that we must try to become more holy in order to be sure of our salvation.

St. Paul says, **“And each who is agonizing, according to all things practices self-restraint. Now they so as a corruptible wreath to receive, but we an incorruptible.”**

Those trekking toward the stadium race agonize and restrain themselves. They apply rigorous discipline concerning every aspect of their lives so as to receive a token of recognition, a token made of cut branches that begin to wither even before being received by the trekking one. This is the ultimate display of the foolishness of selfishness.

But our trek is not like theirs. Our trek is for an accounting that will not fade away. The wreath that we trek toward will not wither and decay.

Did you notice the change in what St. Paul says regarding the recipient of the two wreaths? The first wreath is received by one individual upon his body. The second wreath is received by one body with many members. This wreath is not received by me or you, but by us! There is only one wreath. It has been given to the body of Christ, of which we are members. This is not a multitude of wreaths for various individuals, but Christ's wreath shared by all who are baptized into His body. And this wreath never fades away. It has been won by One for us all. What Christ has accomplished, He accomplished for all.

Do you'all not continue to know that those in a stadium trekking all trek, but one receives the umpire's judgment? And each who is agonizing, according to all things practices self-restraint. Now they so as a corruptible wreath to receive, but we an incorruptible.

III. I TRULY NOW TREK IN THIS WAY

Now the apostle drives home his point.

I truly now in this way trek so as not uncertainly. In this way I box so as not at air beating. But I beat down my body and enslave it lest somehow, to others having preached, myself disqualified I should become.

The way in which St. Paul treks is without uncertainty. Why? Because he is trekking in the way of Jesus. He is not trekking according to his own efforts, but rather, is walking in the Spirit. He is trekking in the grace of Christ poured out abundantly in his baptism.

This is what he means by saying that he is a boxer who does punch at the air. He is not punching at and resisting the Holy Spirit. That would be the utmost in foolishness. Rather than punching at the air, he punches himself in the eye. Whenever his eye looks away from the grace of Christ, he beats himself back down to his knees to confess his unworthiness so that he relies only upon the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. His own body continues to look at satisfaction from other sources, but St. Paul remembers that Jesus told him, "**Sufficient for you is My grace, for My power in weakness is filled up.**" (2 Corinthians 12:9) In Romans 1:16 the apostle says that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. In weakness, in the death of Jesus on the cross, the Gospel is filled up unto us all. In Baptism we are joined with Christ in His death and into His burial and in His resurrection. His victory is made to be ours when we are brought low with Him in His death.

This is the only way in which we may trek without uncertainty. Just as soon as our thoughts become selfish, so that we are striving for victory for ourselves by our own efforts, we forget that we have been united with Christ in His death and we begin to walk in ways that are uncertain. Before long we become disqualified by our reliance upon our own attempts to grow in

sanctification. For our every effort is vanity. Every wreath that we would win for ourselves is corruptible. The wreath by which we have certainty, is the crown of thorns that was beat into the scalp of our Lord, the wreath of thorns that caused His blood to spill over His brow. This is our crown of victory. This is our crown of certainty. This is the crown that is ours even today, as we share in our common baptism together in Christ Jesus.

CONCLUSION - All were baptized, all ate and drank of Christ

This is how St. Paul draws this issue together in chapter ten.

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

“The fathers of us all” the apostle writes to the congregation in Corinth. How many of these people had Jewish ancestry? Yet St. Paul says, **“The fathers of us all.”** They all were baptized into Moses and they all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. Yet they did not all continue in this baptism and they did not all continue in this eating and drinking. They all were baptized into the true faith, but they did not all continue together in this one true faith. They all ate and drank from Christ, but they did not all continue in Christ.

This is what St. Paul warned against concerning the divisions of doctrine and practice among the Corinthians. They needed to be directed again to their mutual dependence in God’s Holy Communion. For the race is not ours to run. Christ ran the race for us, all the way to the victory of the cross. It is His crown that has been placed upon His body. It is only in Him, united by the true faith that we receive when we are baptized into Him, the same faith that is renewed for us as together we eat of His body and drink of His blood, this is the way in which St. Paul reminds us that we must trek so as to receive the umpire’s judgment of victory.

This is the way of absolute certainty. This is the Way in which we share as one body in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.