

The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 482, 478, 480, 370

The INTROIT

(Ps.95:6,7,1)

P: Oh, come, let us worship and bow down;

C: let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker.

P: For he is our God;

C: and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

P: Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord;

C: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our Salvation.

The COLLECT

Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 51:9-16 (NKJV)

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD! Awake as in the ancient days, In the generations of old. Are You not the arm that cut Rahab apart, And wounded the serpent? Are You not the One who dried up the sea, The waters of the great deep; That made the depths of the sea a road For the redeemed to cross over?

So the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

“I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you should be afraid Of a man who will die, And of the son of a man who will be made like grass? And you forget the LORD your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens And laid the foundations of the earth; You have feared continually every day Because of the fury of the oppressor, When he has prepared to destroy. And where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hastens, that he may be loosed, That he should not die in the pit, And that his bread should not fail.

But I am the LORD your God, Who divided the sea whose waves roared; The LORD of hosts is His name. And I have put My words in your mouth; I have covered you with the shadow of My hand, That I may plant the heavens, Lay the foundations of the earth, And say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’”

The GRADUAL

(Ps.56:13; 36:9)

P: Thou hast delivered my soul from death:

C: mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

P: I love the Lord:

C: because he hath heard my voice and my supplication. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: With Thee is the fountain of life:

C: in Thy light shall we see light. Hallelujah!

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Ps. 119:124)

P: Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding:

C: that I may know Thy testimonies. Hallelujah!

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Matthew 9:18-26 (NKJV)

While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live." So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples.

And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well."

But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that hour.

When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, "Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him.

But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land.

Colossians 1:9-14 — "Praying and Asking"

INTRODUCTION

I. SINCE THE DAY WE HEARD IT

II. PRAYING AND ASKING

III. IN WHOM WE HAVE THE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD

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Colossians 1:9-14 — “Praying and Asking”

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

The sermon text is the Epistle reading appointed for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity, Colossians 1:9-14,

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

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

INTRODUCTION

Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ through will of God and Timothy the brother, to the in Colosse saints and faithful brothers in Christ Jesus, grace to you-all and peace from God, Father of us and LORD Jesus Christ.

This is the opening of this epistle. These words declare the purpose for the letter. It is an apostolic letter, written to convey the love and concern of the apostle Paul and Timothy the brother. The letter is addressed to the *in Colosse saints and faithful brothers in Christ Jesus*. It is written to encourage and edify those of whom the apostle and the brother have heard wonderful news. These are saints, holy ones, made holy by the faith by which they have been made to be brothers in Christ Jesus.

This is what could be counted as the apostle's preferred salutation. This is the way that St. Paul begins his letters to the churches that are walking in spirit, the congregations that are adhering to the pure Gospel and Sacraments. To the congregations that are troubled by heretics the apostle uses a different salutation. In the epistles to the Corinthians, the Thessalonians, and the Galatians, the apostle addresses the salutation to the church or churches. In those epistles he is having to identify false Christians, hypocrites, who must be called to repent of their hypocrisy or be excommunicated. But in this epistle, no indication of such has been conveyed to the apostle and he addresses them as saints and faithful brothers in Christ Jesus. Thus with the salutation we behold that the purpose of this letter is one of edification without the need for scolding. Now to the text.

I. SINCE THE DAY WE HEARD IT

Through this also we from the day we heard do not cease over you-all, praying and asking.

From Epaphras, the dear servant of Christ on behalf of the saints and faithful brethren in Colosse, the apostle and those with him heard about the wonderful things that God was working. Through this, through hearing these great works of God for these saints, St. Paul and the others never stop concerning these saints and brethren. On and on they go, thinking of them continually, never having them out of their hearts. On and on they go, giving thanks and praising God for what God has done and continues to do. From the day that they heard, they do not cease over these saints in Colosse that dear Epaphras has told them about.

This is not a congregation that requires an apostolic visitation. They have a faithful pastor who never serves anything other than the pure Gospel by which the saints were regenerated. Their pastor preaches the pure Gospel and administers the Sacraments in absolute accord with Christ's institution. The dear saints honor this and receive these heavenly treasures from their pastor with hearts filled with love and thanksgiving. They do not seek other things. They rely upon the means of grace and receive them from their pastor in sincerity and peace.

This is the picture of a congregation that exemplifies the connection of heaven and earth. In this congregation true concord exists. In this congregation the Sacrament feeds and nourishes all who gather, and everyone grows in God's grace and peace.

Unlike the letters to the Corinthians and the Thessalonians and the Galatians, this is a very easy letter to write. It is a letter of acknowledgment of unanimity in the doctrine and practice which the apostles teach and command for the good of Christ's Church. Writing this letter is pure joy for the apostle. It is a letter which Epaphras can carry home and share happily for the encouragement and edification of those entrusted by God to his spiritual care.

II. PRAYING AND ASKING

Through this also we from the day we heard do not cease over you-all, praying and asking that you-all should be filled *with respect to the over-knowledge of the will of Him in all wisdom and putting together spiritual.*

From the apostle to the Gentiles we learn where prayer comes from and what form true prayer takes. The apostle and those with him never stop thinking about what God has done and has promised to complete for His saints. This motivates them to pray and to beg God concerning the needs of the saints of whom they have heard.

It is amazing to notice what St. Paul, the fullest measure of a missionary, does not mention in his prayers and comments. Amazingly, truly astoundingly, he does not mention anything about reaching out to the community. He does not say anything about desiring to grow the congregation's numbers. He does not mention tithing. He does not mention anywhere in this epistle even a single word about increasing the membership of the congregation through outreach and other methods.

Why not? Why doesn't he mention things like friendship Sundays? Why does the apostle not pray that the people will develop a heart for the lost and to feel a burden for the lost?

Why? Because these are not what Christ has ordained for the Church. The Church is the gathering of the saints to the means of grace. The Church is the place that is set apart as a gleaming city on a hill. The Church is set in the world for the world to approach.

Thus, this is what the apostle and those with him share as their never-ending concern. The apostle's never-ending concern is that the Light that causes the Church to shine like the stars will never be lost to the Church. After all, who gathers to a light that has been extinguished?

Therefore, the apostle speaks of the prayers to God that the saints should be filled-up completely with respect to the over-knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and putting together spiritual. The work of bringing people to the Church is the Holy Spirit's work. Certainly the saints pray continually as the Lord Jesus teaches us, **"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done."**

As St. Paul writes to the saints in Rome, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, not our evangelism efforts. The preaching of the Gospel is what the Church is about, preaching through daily conversation that flows from the preaching of the gathering to the pure Gospel and Sacraments.

This is why St. Paul continues explaining his prayers that the saints should walk worthy of the LORD. The witness that the Lord Jesus commissions in Matthew 28 is not one of every member of the Church going out with the intention of making disciples. In fact, this is not even what the apostles were to do. Rather, Jesus says, **"walking, therefore, disciple all the nations."**

This is not a command to go out to the nations. It is a command that wherever the Lord causes us to go in our earthly journeys that those who observe our lives of faith and ask us regarding the hope that we have should not be turned away but should be discipled. How? How are disciples made when they come asking regarding the peace of God that they see displayed in our lives? By baptizing and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever that Jesus has commanded for His Church. When the Church's focus is the pure administration of the Gospel and the Sacraments, the Lord multiplies the Church. When the Church focuses upon the efforts and plans of the members and leaders, the Lord and His works are buried and forgotten and division and legalism replace the means of grace. In time, the Church stops being the Church and becomes a place of moralism and social networking.

This is why St. Paul's prayers are that the worthiness of the saints would continue to be the worthiness of the LORD. This is what the Gospel declares. This is what Baptism teaches so that even the tiniest baby hears and believes. This is what the Holy Supper nourishes and renews in God's little ones of all ages. When the means of grace are the focus and life of the Church, the saints are truly **"strengthened in all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light."**

III. IN WHOM WE HAVE THE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD

Yes, this is entirely God's mighty accomplishment. This strengthening of which St. Paul writes and prays is the same *dunamis* or power that he writes of in Romans 1:16. It is the Gospel. Without the pure Gospel there is no power for salvation. Without the pure Gospel there is no patience and longsuffering with joy. Without the pure Gospel, rather than patience there is bickering and rather than longsuffering with joy there is striving after becoming better Christians.

Without the pure Gospel, rather than giving thanks in the Eucharist where the Father directs us to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, instead the saints are taught to turn the examination of self into an examination of one's own works and faith rather than an examination of what God has worked through Baptism. Our worthiness to be partakers is the LORD's worthiness.

Thus the apostle declares to us in this connection:

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Most assuredly it is the LORD, our God and Father, who has delivered us and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. It is in this Son of the Father's love in whom we have redemption. How do we have this redemption? We have this redemption through His blood.

How can we imagine that our worthiness is in any way something that we accomplish? How can we imagine that the examination that we are to conduct is an examination of what we have understood? God forbid! Our examination is to cause us to see what God has done. Our examination is to lead us to despair completely of all of our works, even our work of believing. Rather, we are to be filled with the over-knowledge of God's will, His holy will declared in Baptism, applied to us with water so that we would know that we have truly received it. By this marvelous Sacrament of Water and Word the LORD gives us His seal and guarantee that we may approach to receive the blood of our redemption, the blood of our forgiveness. It is by His declaration that we are righteous so that we are worthy to partake of the blood of Christ by which we have redemption.

The will of God is that we be baptized into Christ Jesus and be raised to live as those who have been made by the Father to be a part of the inheritance of the saints in the light. Having been converted to this end through Baptism, we are to examine ourselves to see that indeed it is purely by God's grace and not by any decision of our own that we are worthy to receive the blood of redemption.

This is what St. Paul says that he never stops praying for the saints, that they should always be filled with the over-knowledge of God's will so that they realize that the author and perfecter of our faith is Jesus. Then, rather than trying to work up sufficient faith to come to Him, rather we will run to His Table to receive the redemption that has been promised to us in the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. Then we will not eat and drink unworthily ourselves, and we will make certain that all the household of God comes to His feast according to His worthiness that He provides.

CONCLUSION

How wonderful it is when we gather as those whom God has called, gathered, enlightened, and sanctified! How beautiful is the Gospel by which God accomplishes this. How truly thankful we may be when we gather on account of the redemption that is through the blood of Christ. As the dear apostle declared of himself and those with him, God grant that this is ever our praying and asking as well. Then we shall remain united by the power of the Holy Spirit in accord with the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall everlastingly feast together in the inheritance of the saints in the light. 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.