

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 508, 383, 348, 467

The INTROIT

(Eccl.36:16,17;Ps.122:1)

P: Reward them that wait for Thee, O Lord,
C: and let Thy prophets be found faithful.
P: Hear the prayer of Thy servants
C: and of Thy people Israel.
P: I was glad when they said unto me,
C: “Let us go into the house of the Lord.”

The COLLECT

O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth, and reigneth, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

FIRST LESSON

Deuteronomy 10:12-21

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *is* the LORD's thy God, the earth *also*, with all that therein *is*. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He *is* thy praise, and he *is* thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

THE GRADUAL

(Ps.122:1,7;117:1)

P: I was glad when they said unto me:
C: Let us go into the house of the Lord.
P: Peace be within thy walls:
C: and prosperity within thy palaces. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
P: Oh, praise the Lord, all ye nations:
C: Praise Him, all ye people. Hallelujah!

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and *in* all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE HOLY GOSPEL

St. Matthew 22:31-46

But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine.

But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, *which was* a lawyer, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and saying, Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?

They say unto him, *The Son of David*.

He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more *questions*.

Deuteronomy 10:12-21 — “What Does the Lord Thy God Require of Thee”

INTRODUCTION

I. AND NOW, ISRAEL, WHAT DOES THE LORD THY GOD REQUIRE OF THEE

II. ONLY THE LORD HAD A DELIGHT IN THY FATHERS TO LOVE THEM

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Deuteronomy 10:12-21 — “What Does the Lord Thy God Require of Thee”

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

The Old Testament reading appointed for the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity is
Deuteronomy 10:12-21:

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *is* the LORD's thy God, the earth *also*, with all that therein *is*. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He *is* thy praise, and he *is* thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

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

INTRODUCTION

In the Collect of the Day we pray: **“O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts.”** This is a little prayer in the number of the words, but it is a very big prayer in what it says. God grant that we hear and learn what He teaches us in this prayer, and in our text for this day.

I. AND NOW, ISRAEL, WHAT DOES THE LORD THY GOD REQUIRE OF THEE

Our text begins with the prophet Moses declaring unto the people of Israel: **“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee?”**

The book of Deuteronomy is a recounting of all that the LORD has done for his people in delivering them from their slavery and keeping them for the past forty years. Today we hear what Moses calls to the memory of the people of God concerning the Holy Communion that the LORD established and continually calls His people to be partakers of as His people.

Notice how Moses addresses them. He addresses them as Israel. Israel means: prevails with God. It is singular, not plural. Moses addresses them as one people, one man. He continues addressing them as one saying, **“What doth the LORD thy God require of thee?”**

How often do we mistakenly apply this to ourselves as individuals? How often do we imagine that we come to God and fear Him according to our own personal faith? How often do we hear sermons that speak of coming to Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior?

Is this what Moses teaches? Is this what the Scriptures teach? Is this what is declared anywhere in the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit has given? Where does the Holy Spirit ever teach us to come trust in God as individuals? Where does God ever speak of walking in His ways as individuals? Where does God ever speak of calling us to be a child of God apart from His one holy catholic Church?

Who is Israel? Who is the one who prevails with God? Who is the one man who truly and without compromise feared the Lord his God and walked in all His ways and loved Him and served Him with all his heart and with all his soul and kept the commandments of the LORD and His statutes?

Truly there is only ONE such man. He is the true Israel. In Him we are incorporated through Baptism and made to be one flesh again. In Him we are crucified in the flesh, to die to the world and to sin, and are raised up again in the image of God, which is Christ.

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee?

The word that is translated here as *require* is *sha'al*. It is defined as: *to ask, seek, enquire, borrow, beg*. This word can carry the meaning of *require* or *demand*, but is this what Moses is teaching us here? Which fits better with the tone of one who calls Himself and acts as *Redeemer, Savior, Father, Deliverer, Provider, Creator*? How did the LORD deal with Adam in the garden after Adam hid in fear? Did the LORD not call out to Adam? Did the LORD not enquire as to where Adam was, when Adam and his wife ordinarily had previously come eagerly to the sound of the LORD walking in the garden? Did the LORD not coax the confession of sin from Adam?

Moses does proceed in the next verse in our text to speak of the commandment of the LORD, but listen to how the commandments and statutes are presented.

To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Is this not the loving tone of a Father begging His family to follow what is good for them? Is this the tone of a demanding God or of a God who begs His family to walk in the safe ways that He has established and planned and provided for them? The LORD our God begs us, urges us, needles us, nags us, to follow Him, because He knows that there is no other way in which we can live in His way of blessedness.

But these are not suggestions. They are commands. And yes, from this perspective, they are requirements. For our happiness and safety and everlasting life require these things. We cannot receive the blessed life apart from the way that the LORD has provided. His way truly is the only way. Truly, we can know the love of God and live in His grace, mercy, and peace, only as we live in true fear, love, and trust within the communion of the one holy catholic Church.

II. ONLY THE LORD HAD A DELIGHT IN THY FATHERS TO LOVE THEM

Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth *also*, with all that therein is. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

Everything is the LORD's. So what could He require of us, except that we receive His good gifts in the manner that He gives them? But again, with what tone does He speak to us? **“Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day.”** The LORD had a delight in thy fathers. The word is *chashak*, which means *to love, be attached to, long for*. The LORD attached Himself to the patriarchs to love them.

On whom does the requirement lie? On whom does the work of approaching and calling and begging rest? The people of Israel inherited the covenant of circumcision that the LORD made with Abraham. Whose covenant was this? Who initiated it and established it? It was the LORD's covenant. It was a physical sign that was to be made in the flesh, a sign of the fact that God Himself had joined Himself to Abraham and his descendants. This was a union in the flesh. For the promise was that through Abraham's descendants the Seed of Abraham would be born into the world, and through this one seed all the nations would be blessed, all who would receive the blessing through the promise made to Abraham.

God established with Abraham an everlasting covenant to be kept forever. The fleshly sheath of protection to the instrument of the marital union of the flesh, this fleshly covering was to be cut off from all the men until the Seed should be born. In the garden, Adam and his wife fashioned makeshift coverings for themselves. But they could not hide. Their sin remained. Death had overcome them. They were separated from the Lord of Life. God came to them and removed their attempts at covering themselves. He exposed them to the power of His Word and they confessed their sin and He gave them new coverings for going into the world. But it was His covenant, His promise of the Seed that would crush the head of the serpent, that protected them from the condemnation of their sin. With Abraham, the LORD established the removal of the protective flesh to keep His people separated from the way of sin, separated unto Him, abiding in His covenant in connection with the promise of the fleshly protection that would come into the world through the birth of God's Word in the flesh. With this promise, all of our attempts to cover our hearts to protect them from exposure are cut away so that the Word pierces our hearts to open them to the entrance of the Holy Spirit and God's grace.

This is what Moses teaches, saying, **“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.”** When we stop trying to heal ourselves, when we stop trying to protect ourselves from being exposed for the poor miserable sinners that we are, when instead of hiding in the darkness we rather hear the call to come into the light of the Gospel, our sins are exposed as being taken by Jesus into His flesh, and we are made to be free to live in the light again. This is what the Lord Jesus explains in John 8:

As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage

to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. (John 8:30-40)

Here we observe that people are not saved and brought into the kingdom of God by believing. These people heard the words of Jesus and believed on Him, yet to them He says that they are not truly of the covenant of Abraham. The faith that God gives is the faith that saves. This is not a faith that we choose for ourselves, but a faith that is born in us and moves us to believe with the one true faith. The Son is the Truth that makes us free. It is in connection with Him that the foreskin of our hearts is circumcised. We are not the doers of faith but the recipients of it. Faith is the work of God that works in us. When this is the Way in which we walk, then we are truly free. For then it is the Son that has made us free. Then we are the children in whom God has delight, for we are children born of God. Then we are no longer stiffnecked and we no longer resist the Holy Spirit. Then we no longer insist on believing in order to be saved, but acknowledge that because God has saved us we believe in His salvation.

III. LOVE YE THEREFORE

For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

This is what the LORD begs and commands of us in calling us to fear Him and to walk in all His ways. God acts with judgment on behalf of the fatherless and widow. God loves the stranger, giving him food and raiment.

And who is the fatherless and the widow and the stranger? Every sinful human being born into the world is the fatherless and the widow and the stranger. We are the fatherless and the widow and the stranger who are helpless and on whose behalf the LORD acts as a terrible and mighty God. The LORD is the one who lifted up His mighty hand of judgment against sin, death, and the evil one, executing His judgment by taking the sin of the world in His own body on the cross. He died the death of sin for us. He carried the curse for us. He has established His household of faith, His own body of the Church, wherein He gives us the food of life and washes us and clothes us with the raiment of righteousness.

Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He *is* thy praise, and he *is* thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

What God has done and continues to do for us is what moves us to act like Him. We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19) Because we have received His love and have been generated as His children of love, we love Him and live in His love. His love overflows to all mankind, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. It is His love and His judgment of love that rules over us in our hearts and lives as His beloved children.

His forgiveness is the key that opens the door to the kingdom of heaven. His forgiveness is the key that opens our hearts so that we receive Him as our God of forgiveness and love. His forgiveness is the key that opens our hearts to love Him and therefore also to love others.

This is not a choice that we make. Rather, it is the choice that God has made for us. He has chosen us and has called us to be His children of grace. He has loved us from eternity and His love fills us and moves us to live by grace through faith. His love moves us to acknowledge that *He is our praise*. He is not merely the one whom we praise. He IS our praise. He has done the great and terrible things by which He has made Himself to be our praise and our God. Thus, as the children of His house, as one, we serve Him, calling and ordaining a pastor to serve Him to us through the preaching and Sacraments. Through these we cleave to Him in His body and swear by His name in the Sacraments and in the Liturgy.

CONCLUSION

In Christ Jesus we are Israel together, standing as one man in the one body of Jesus. In Him we do fear the LORD our God and we do walk in all His ways and we do love Him and serve Him with all our heart and with all our souls and we do keep His commandments and statutes. We do this not by our own efforts, but we do this in connection with the perfect obedience of Jesus, whose righteousness is imputed to us in Baptism. Thus we look not to our own works, but to His, and from His works we stand in amazement to see His works at work in and through us. His love is made to be our love. His faith is made to be our faith. In Him we live and breathe and have our being. Thanks be to God who loves us and joins Himself to us. 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.