

28/06/20 Third Sunday after Trinity Readings and Commentaries

Prayers

Collect

Almighty God,
you have broken the tyranny of sin
and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts
whereby we call you Father:
give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that we and all creation may be brought
to the glorious liberty of the children of God;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen

Heavenly Father

We pray for your blessing on our local community,
that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship,
where all are known and cared for:
For our homes and families,
our schools and young people,
and all in any kind of need or distress:

May your church and faithful people share your love and reflect your glory.

Amen

Preliminary Comments:

The book of Judges has featured highly in Morning Prayer over the past week. The book covers some of the significant events in the history of the Israelites after Joshua led them into the 'Promised Land'. The leaders of the Israelites after Joshua died were known as 'Judges' and this is how the book derives its name.

'Peace be with you'

I hope you are well.

With the resumption of church services, starting on the 5th July 2020. This will be the last set of commentaries produced in this format. Please come and join us in St John's to worship God and listen to his word.

These commentaries are not meant to be a sermon but hopefully a way to expand our engagement with the word of God.

Please continue to love your neighbour and pray for all those who are suffering at this testing time. Prayer cannot be quarantined. Our hope is in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

Regards Revd M Orr

The book starts with the death of Joshua, the great leader, who brought the Israelites over the river Jordan, defeated the Canaanites, and won the Promised Land. At the end of the book of Joshua, the Israelites were warned about the consequences of not remaining true to their covenant with God.

The book of Judges reveals, how to begin with, the Israelites remained true and they continued to be successful and prospered. Then Israel falls into a cycle of sin and decline. The people progressively become more sinful, degenerate and take up the customs of the Canaanites, this leads to them being conquered and oppressed by their enemies. The people then recognise their sins and repent, then God raises up a leader to defeat their enemy. This sequence is repeated, time after time.

Twelve Judges are referred to in the book, with names like Othniel, Deborah and Gideon, however, as time goes on the character of the Judges become more and more questionable, moving from good to bad to worse and finishing with Samson. Samson was promiscuous, violent, and arrogant. However, God was still able to use Samson to achieve God's promise to the Israelites. This is an indication of the decline of the moral character of the nation over generations. Again, God's righteous character is contrasted against the corruption and self-indulgence of humanity.

Romans 6:12-end

Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³ No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Slaves of Righteousness

¹⁵ What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, ¹⁸ and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

²⁰ When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Commentary:

In previous commentaries the meaning of the terms 'righteousness' and 'justification' were explained and in this passage another word, 'sanctification' is used. Sanctification means, to be set apart, dedicated to God. In chapters 5 and 6, Paul informs the church about how sin affects all of humanity all the time. He also informs the church how sin and the slavery it brings can be overcome by the grace of Christ.

Paul is dealing with the same age-old human problem, people usually choose the easy way, it is easier to sin than to follow Christ. It is the same message as that moves through the Old Testament, God is righteous and faithful, humans are not.

However, Paul informs the church that there is hope, sin can be left behind, and a new life can begin through the grace of Christ. Paul encourages the church to find the justification that is in the grace of Christ and therefore be set apart from the rest of the world. Faith in Christ will bring justification and that will lead to sanctification.

This is a recurring theme throughout the Old Testament, God set the Israelites apart for the rest of the world so that they could be a holy nation. The Israelites failed to uphold their side of the covenant, they continually fell into sin and done what was wrong in the sight of God. Sin binds the individual and blinds them, then leads them to destruction. What sin does to the individual it does to communities and nations.

That is why Paul ends the chapter with the unequivocal statement in verse 23 'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'.

Matthew 10:40-end

⁴⁰ 'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

⁴¹ 'Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴² and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'

Commentary:

In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus has sent out his disciples to bring the gospel to the people, he has also warned the disciples that the message they bring will not be universally welcomed. The gospel will be rejected, the people who bring the gospel will also be rejected and this will bring strife in some cases.

As the chapter comes to an end, Jesus finishes with words of encouragement. Those who receive the gospel will receive him and 'He', God, who sent him. In a culture that believed when a special person was received

into a household, they could give a blessing, the greater the person, the greater the blessing. Jesus is saying in this passage, it does not matter about the stature of the person who brings the message it is the message that is important. Therefore, whoever receives the gospel, receives the grace of Christ, the greatest of all blessings. The blessing comes with the Holy Spirit, who will free the faithful from the bondage of sin, justify them through Grace and bring them to sanctification. As Jesus said, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10).

AMAZING GRACE!

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!
Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;

'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there a thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

John Newton (1725-1807)