

Sunday, August 29, 2021

Lectionary 22, Year B

Introduction

Jesus protests against human customs being given the weight of divine law, while the essence of God's law is ignored. True uncleanness comes not from external things, but from the intentions of the human heart. Last week Jesus told us "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). Now James says God has given us birth by the word of truth. We who were washed in the word when we were born in the font return to it every Sunday to ask God to create in us clean hearts.

Confession and Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,
the God of manna,
the God of miracles,
the God of mercy.

Amen.

Drawn to Christ and seeking God's abundance,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God, our provider,
help us.

It is hard to believe there is enough to share.
We question your ways when they differ from the ways
of the world in which we live.

We turn to our own understanding
rather than trusting in you.

We take offense at your teachings and your ways.

Turn us again to you.

Where else can we turn?

Share with us the words of eternal life
and feed us for life in the world.

Amen.

Beloved people of God:
in Jesus, the manna from heaven,
you are fed and nourished.

By Jesus, the worker of miracles,
there is always more than enough.

Through Jesus, ☩ the bread of life,
you are shown God's mercy:
you are forgiven and loved into abundant life.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

O God our strength, without you we are weak and wayward creatures. Protect us from all dangers that attack us from the outside, and cleanse us from all evil that arises from within ourselves, that we may be preserved through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. God gave us birth by the¹ word of truth* so that we would become a kind of first fruits¹ of creation. *Alleluia.* (*James 1:18*)

Readings and Psalm

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

God's law: a sign of a great nation

Psalm 15

LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle? (*Ps. 15:1*)

James 1:17-27

Be doers of the word, not hearers only

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Authentic religion

Semicontinuous First Reading and Psalm

Song of Solomon 2:8-13

Song of two lovers

Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9

God has anointed you with the oil of gladness. (*Ps. 45:7*)

First Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

The Israelites believed the law was a divine gift that provided guidelines for living out the covenant. Moses commands the people to obey the law and to neither add to nor subtract from it. The Israelites are also to teach the law to their children and their children's children.

¹So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. ²You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you.

⁶You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!” ⁷For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? ⁸And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this

entire law that I am setting before you today?

⁹But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.

Psalm: Psalm 15

LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle? (Ps. 15:1)

¹LORD, who may dwell in your ¹ tabernacle?

Who may abide upon your ¹ holy hill?

²**Those who lead a blameless life and do ¹ what is right,**

who speak the truth ¹ from their heart;

³they do not slander with the tongue, they do no evil ¹ to their friends;

they do not cast discredit up- ¹ on a neighbor.

⁴**In their sight the wicked are rejected, but they honor those who ¹ fear the LORD.**

They have sworn upon their health and do not take ¹ back their word.

⁵They do not give their money in hope of gain, nor do they take bribes a- ¹ gainst the innocent.

Those who do these things shall never be ¹ overthrown. R

Second Reading: James 1:17-27

The letter of James was intended to provide first-century Christians with instruction in godly behavior. Here Christians are encouraged to listen carefully and to act on what they hear, especially by caring for those least able to care for themselves.

¹⁷Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

¹⁹You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. ²¹Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

²²But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

²⁶If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Mark's gospel depicts Jesus as challenging traditional ways in which religious people determine what is pure or impure. For Jesus, the observance of religious practices cannot become a substitute for godly words or deeds that spring from a faithful heart.

¹Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around [Jesus], ²they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. ³(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; ⁴and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) ⁵So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” ⁶He said to them, “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
⁷in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.’

⁸You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”

¹⁴Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.”

²¹For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, ²²adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. ²³All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Semicontinuous First Reading: Song of Solomon 2:8-13

Though using language and images of a love story, the Song of Solomon has long been interpreted allegorically. Jewish lore sees it as a description of the love between God and Israel. Christians have often interpreted the Song as a description of the love between Christ and his church.

⁸The voice of my beloved!

Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.

⁹My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.

Look, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing in at the windows,
looking through the lattice.

¹⁰My beloved speaks and says to me:

“Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;

¹¹for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.

¹²The flowers appear on the earth;

the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

¹³The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.”

Semicontinuous Psalm: Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9

God has anointed you with the oil of gladness. (Ps. 45:7)

¹My heart is stirring with a noble song; let me recite what I have fashioned ¹ for the king;
my tongue shall be the pen of a ¹ skillful writer.

²**You are the noblest a- ¹ mong the people;**
grace flows from your lips, because God has blessed ¹ you forever. R

⁶Your throne, O God, endures forev- ¹ er and ever,
a scepter of righteousness is the scepter ¹ of your kingdom.

⁷**You love righteousness and ¹ hate iniquity;**
**therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above ¹ your
companions.**

⁸All your garments are fragrant with myrrh, al- ¹ oes, and cassia,
and the music of strings from ivory palaces ¹ makes you glad.

⁹**Kings' daughters stand among the ladies ¹ of the court;**
on your right hand is the queen, adorned with the ¹ gold of Ophir. R

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church, that it is a safe haven for all who seek your presence. Fill it with pastors, deacons, and leaders who echo your expansive and generous welcome. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the whole of creation, that plants and animals have the habitat and resources to thrive and flourish. Inspire us to protect threatened habitats and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for individuals in positions of authority (*national and local leaders may be named*). Raise up wise and discerning leaders in federal, state, and local governments and guide them to seek the benefit of every person. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for all who are in need. Support and encourage those who are unemployed, underemployed, or experiencing poverty. Bring food, shelter, clothes, and stability for daily life. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for this congregation, especially those beginning a new school year (*students, teachers, or others may be named here*). Empower teachers and school administrators. Guide students in their learning and development. Accompany parents, foster parents, and caregivers who provide encouragement and love. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for the faithful departed who showed us how to honor God with our heart. Inspire us by their example and renew our faith, trusting that we will be united with them in glory. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Offering Prayer

Jesus, Bread of life,
you have set this table with your very self,
and called us to the feast of plenty.
Gather what has been sown among us,
and strengthen us in this meal.
Make us to be what we receive here,
your body for the life of the world.

Amen.

Invitation to Communion

Christ has set the table with more than enough for all.
Come!

Prayer after Communion

Jesus, Bread of life,
we have received from your table
more than we could ever ask.
As you have nourished us in this meal,
now strengthen us to love the world with your own life.
In your name we pray.

Amen.

Blessing

The blessing of God,
who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us,
☩ be upon you now and forever.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

Upcoming Commemorations

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, died 430

Saturday, August 28, 2021

Augustine was one of the greatest theologians of the Western church. A native of North Africa, he recovered from a debauched young adulthood through the influence of his mother, Monica, and Bishop Ambrose of Milan. Besides writing influential theological books, he served as bishop of Hippo, in present-day Algeria.

Moses the Black, monk, martyr, died around 400

Saturday, August 28, 2021

Converted from life as a thief and a robber to Christianity, Moses was an Ethiopian who became a desert monk at Skete. The change in his heart and life had a profound impact on his native country. He was murdered when Berber bandits attacked his monastery.

Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, bishop, renewer of the church, died 1872

Thursday, September 2, 2021

Grundtvig was, with Søren Kierkegaard, one of the two great Danish theologians of the nineteenth century. As a pastor, he battled the prevalent idea that Christianity was more a philosophy than divine revelation. He wrote over a thousand hymns.

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