

# Proper 24



<IMG height=1 src="" width=1 border=0>

Proper 24  
Pentecost 22  
October 20, 2002

## Prayer of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ you have revealed your glory among the nations. Preserve the works of your mercy, that your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of your name; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Isaiah 45:1-7

{1} Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and strip kings of their robes, to open doors before him-- and the gates shall not be closed: {2} I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, {3} I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. {4} For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me. {5} I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I arm you, though you do not know me, {6} so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. {7} I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the LORD do all these things.

*1. Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus:* In 44:24-28, Yahweh says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd, and he shall carry out all my purpose...." Now he speaks directly to Cyrus, calling him, Messiah. The word Messiah refers to the practice of anointing the king as a part of the ritual of succession. Its use was confined primarily to the Kingdom of Judah and is used as a royal title in the Psalms as well as in its only use in the prophetic literature. [1] This is a unique use of the title, and refers "to a specific commission that Yahweh gives to Cyrus; Yahweh charges him to do something that will be to Israel's salvation.... Furthermore, since Cyrus achieves salvation for Israel by political and military means he is not just an instrument of Yahweh; he replaces the Davidic dynasty, which is now condemned to impotence. Hence the title as applied to Cyrus is to be understood in terms of the Davidic monarchy. As salvation was expected from the kingly rule of the anointed one of the house of David, so hope now focuses on the Persian king, who steps in the breach for the line of David, now that it is hampered from deploying its power.... the expression, which is ventured only this one time, is an extremely bold one." [2]

*2-5. you:* Isaiah describes Yahweh calling Cyrus by name, a phrase which conveys the idea of revelation. Cyrus will know that it is Yahweh who has called him, even though Cyrus does not know the Lord.

*5:* Yahweh declares his name and uniqueness. "There is no other."

*7:* Yahweh defines himself as the creator of light and dark and the one who produces weal and woe in human experience. "There is no thought in the O.T. of reducing all evil, moral and physical, to a single principle. Moral evil proceeds from the will of man, physical evil from the will of God, who sends it as the punishment of sin." [3]

## Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13]

{1} O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. {2} Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. {3} Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. {4} For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods. {5} For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. {6} Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. {7} Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the

LORD glory and strength. {8} Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. {9} Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth. {10} Say among the nations, "The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity." {11} Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; {12} let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy {13} before the LORD; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

2. *Sing to the Lord, bless his name*: "There is a difference between Yahweh and his [*shem* "name"]. "Even though the [*shem YHWH* "name of Yahweh"] indicates the side of Yahweh that is turned toward the human being, by the same token Yahweh himself is looked upon as unapproachable. Only in his [*shem*] can the human being come to him" (O. Grether, *Name und Wort Gottes im Alten Testament*, BZAW 64[1934]41). [4]

5. *all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens*: Not only are the gods of the nations subordinate to Yahweh, in the final analysis they are nothing (Isaiah 44:8-20). The connection with the first lesson is between this verse and Isaiah 45:5.

7-9. *families of the peoples*: The non-Israelite peoples are called on to worship Yahweh.

[10-13]: "In v. 10 the decisive formula is found through which the whole song is tied to the enthronement psalms. The 'Sitz im Leben [setting in life]' of Psalm is found in the 'festival of Yahweh's enthronement' .... Motifs and verbatim borrowings from older Yahweh as King hymns can be pointed out.... Psalm 96 is dependent on Isaiah 40-66 in its conception and images." [5]

## 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

{1} Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. {2} We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly {3} remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. {4} For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, {5} because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. {6} And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, {7} so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. {8} For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. {9} For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, {10} and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

See Acts 17. "They conducted an evangelistic campaign in the Jewish synagogue for three weeks and were successful in converting a number of Jews together with a larger number of Gentiles, both men and women, who worshipped at the Synagogue." [6]

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians about 50-51 ad from Corinth to Christian Gentiles in Thessalonica, the administrative capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, which together with Achaia generally covered present-day Greece. Thessalonica was a cosmopolitan city on the *Via Egnatia* a trade route between Constantinople and Apollonia and Dyrrhachium on the Adriatic Sea.

1. *Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy*: Silvanus is Silas [7] of Antioch, a prophet, who was one of Paul's associates when he was first sent out from the congregation in Antioch (Acts 15:22, 32). Prior to that he was a leader in the Jerusalem church. When Paul and Barnabas separated, Paul selected Silas as his companion (15:40-16:40). Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother and Greek father whom Paul baptized and trained (Acts 16:1). Because Timothy's father was a Gentile, Paul had him circumcised so he would be acceptable to the Jews in Asia Minor (Acts 16:3). Silas and Timothy remained in Beroea when Paul was taken to Athens to escape Jews from Thessalonica who sought to discredit him (Acts 17:14-17). They joined him in Corinth after Timothy returned to Thessalonica to continue the work of evangelism and to dispute the attacks of others (1 Thessalonians 3:1, 6; Acts 18:5).

*the church of the Thessalonians*: In the Gentile world the word translated "church," *ecclesia* meant a civic assembly. In LXX it meant the community or people of God, the assembly. "Paul usually addresses his letters by reference to the churches as situated in particular places, e.g., 'to

the church of God which is at Corinth' (1 Cor 1:2; cf. 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:2).... Only here and in 2 Thess 1:1 does he [Paul] describe the church in terms of the people of a certain locality who composed it (cf. Col 4:16)...." [8]

2-10: Verses 2 to 10 are all one sentence in Greek. Paul gives thanks for the Thessalonian Christians because of their faith and steadfastness of hope. Such thanksgivings also occur in 1 Corinthians 1:14; Ephesians 1:14 and 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13.

6. *And you became imitators of us and of the Lord*: Paul speaks of imitation of himself also in 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:7, 9; of the churches in Judea in 1 Thessalonians 2:14, and of God in Ephesians 5:1. "Most commonly, it is thought that Paul has in view a sequence: he imitated Christ and the Thessalonians imitated him, he playing an intermediary role between Christ and them." [9]

*in spite of persecution*: Persecution in Thessalonica is mentioned in Acts 17:5-9. Paul mentions the afflictions suffered by the church in Macedonia in 2 Corinthians 8:1 as an incentive to the Corinthians to be generous in their giving for the collection for Jerusalem.

7. *you became an example to all the believers*: As Paul had been an example for the Thessalonians to imitate, so they become examples for others. In 2 Corinthians 9:2 Paul speaks about boasting to the people of Macedonia (among them Thessalonians) that Achaia (specifically Corinth) has been ready since last year for the collection for Jerusalem.

9. *you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God*: See Jeremiah 10:10; Yahweh is the "living God." Gentile Christians in Thessalonica are the intended recipients of the letter, though Paul may have expected the letter to be read by Christian Jews also (1 Thessalonians 5:27).

10: "This is one of the most important verses in the N.T. It was written some twenty years after the resurrection and it expresses in a few words much of the essence of Christianity." [10]

## **Matthew 22:15-22**

{15} Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. {16} So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. {17} Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" {18} But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? {19} Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. {20} Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" {21} They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." {22} When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Parallels: Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26.

1-3: The Pharisees and Herodians conspire to trap Jesus by asking a question which they believe he cannot answer without compromising himself, either with the Roman authorities if he rejects paying taxes to the emperor, or with the people if he approves it. The Pharisees were absolutists in their religious doctrines. The Herodians were monarchists who owed the power of the Herods to Roman favor.

15. *plotted to entrap him*: Literally, *symbolion elabon*, "...we have here a Latinism. The Greek is used five times in Matthew (nowhere else in the New Testament), but it is strange in Greek. It looks like a borrowing of the Latin *consilium ceperunt*, used often (in different tenses) in the sense of 'form a plan' or 'make a decision'." [11]

16-17: The plan or trap is a loaded question. If Jesus says it is lawful to pay taxes he will discredit himself with the people, while if he says it is not lawful (that is, according to the Torah) he will come under the scrutiny of the Romans. And in fact, in Luke 23:2 Jesus is accused of "forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor."

18. *Jesus, aware of their malice*: Jesus' response is quick and direct. First, he calls his opponents "hypocrites" and then forces them to compromise themselves by showing that they possessed unholy Roman coins which had Caesar's image and title, "Tiberius Caesar, Augustus, son of divine Augustus." "If, as is likely, it was the Herodians who had the incriminating coin, they would immediately have set themselves at odds with their collaborators in challenging Jesus:

followers of the Pharisees want to avoid all contact with such an idolatrous object." [12] The usual interpretation that the passage is to be understood to say that the government should be obeyed in temporal matters, but God should be obeyed, even against the government, in religious matters is modern. "...it is more likely that Jesus is grounding obedience to the earthly rule in obedience to God.... At the same time the wider context of the saying in the early church (cf. Acts 5:29) indicates that the power of the earthly ruler is circumscribed by that of God, and that the climax of the saying lies in its assertion of the supreme authority of God's demands, especially when these run counter to those of an earthly ruler." [13]

The issue of non-Christian government finds expression elsewhere in the New Testament. For example, in Acts 5:29, Peter and the apostles reject the Pharisees demand that they not teach about Jesus. Romans 13:1, 6 enjoin paying taxes to Rome and declares that the authorities are ministers of God, while 1 Peter 1:13 admonishes Christians to "be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution." What we should seek from these various answers to the demand of government and religion is not a response that is good in all circumstances, but principle that encourages good citizenship within the limits of theological integrity.

22. *they were amazed; and they left him and went away:* The disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians are compelled to approve of his reply unwillingly.

## Reflection

God is able and willing to use ungodly powers to achieve his ends. He anointed Cyrus as a savior for his people. Christians are to obey governments, even when they are pagan and non-Christian, as the Roman Empire was. For the people of Jesus' day the problem was that religion, and politics were not distinct institutions. To pay taxes to the Roman emperor was to acknowledge the existence and validity of Roman religion. It was difficult, if not impossible, to see a way to keep the two separate.

We face a different situation in 20<sup>th</sup> century America. In a multicultural, multi-religious state we respect other religious traditions and seek neutrality in public recognition of religious concerns. We take care not to mix religion and politics. There are certainly times when the demand for the separation of church and state appears to leave our civil life without moral direction. But the wisdom of two thousand years of political history since the time of Jesus makes it clear that mixing the two jeopardizes civil liberty as well as religious freedom.

The civil and religious freedom provided by our constituting documents reject the notion that the people are to serve the state. Instead the state serves them. Christians, as other citizens, are free to criticize their government, to seek to change its policies, to remove office-holders whose representation is invalid, to seek new benefits and new protections for the welfare of the people. Our political liberty also secures our freedom from religious tyranny. Those who prepared our constituting documents were well aware of the dangers of civil enforcement of religious belief or act. We should not lightly discard the protection against such enforcement as they have provided.

## Hymns [14]

*With One Voice* (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

472/3 E--Come, Holy Ghost,  
413 D--Father Eternal, Ruler  
327 I--Rock of Ages,  
231 II--O Word of God

424 G--Lord of Glory,  
410 G--We Give Thee  
225, 234, 392, 750s

## Prayers of the People [15]

P or A: Recalling the grace and mercy of God, let us pray for the needs of all people saying, "Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning," and responding, "and we shall be glad all our days."

A: That your church may worship and serve you well, grant us leaders who after the example of

the apostle Paul are gentle, going among their people like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. We ask this grace especially for our bishop \_\_\_\_\_, and for our national bishop Telmor. Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning, and we shall be glad all our days.

A: For the afflicted and poor of the earth who are waiting for the mercy of God, we ask how long they must wait. Let a true spirit of jubilee come down over the world so that those with nothing need wait no more. Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning, and we shall be glad all our days.

A: You have said you shall love your neighbor as yourself, is one of the greatest commandments. Teach us to love ourselves in a healthy way so that all our relationships may be enriched. Take away relationships or co-dependencies that damage love and heal the wounds of those who are hurt by them. Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning, and we shall be glad all our days.

A: Nurse and relieve those who are suffering from illness or grief. We name those who have asked for our prayers \_\_\_\_\_. When you turn us back to dust and say, "Go back, child of earth," give us good courage and hope. Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning, and we shall be glad all our days.

P: Show your servants your works and your splendor to their children. We commend ourselves and all people's needs into your care, though Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Or** [16]

*Presider or deacon*

Let us remember before God all who labor in the faith and love of Jesus Christ and all in every danger and need.

*Deacon or other leader*

For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For all peoples and their leaders, for candidates for public office, and for mercy and justice in the world.

For good weather, abundant fruits of the earth, and peaceful times.

For doctors, nurses, and hospital staff, and for all who work in the medical arts.

For the sick and the suffering, travelers and refugees, prisoners and their families, and the dying and dead.

For our city and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with the blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

Loving and true God, who raised your Son from the dead, hear the prayers of those he has chosen and make us imitators of the Lord, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

## Notes

[1] K. Seybold, "[mashah]," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, (ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry). Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998, Volume IX, p. 43.

[2] Franz Hesse, "[Christos]," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Ed. By Gerhard Friedrich). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974, Volume IX, p. 504.

[3] J. Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah: Chapters XL-LXVII*. Cambridge: University Press, 1954, p. 67.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

[5] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-159: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, p. 251.

[6] I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983, p. 3,

[7] "Silas" is, in turn, the Aramaic form of the Hebrew name "Saul."

- [8] Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 2000, p. 98.
- [9] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- [10] D.E.H. Whiteley, *Thessalonians in the Revised Standard Version*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 39.
- [11] Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew: Translation, Introduction and Commentary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981, p. 438.
- [12] Bruce Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, p. 137.
- [13] I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978, pp. 736-737.
- [14] <http://www.worship.ca/text/wpch0102.txt>
- [15] [http://www.worship.ca/text/int\\_a2.txt](http://www.worship.ca/text/int_a2.txt)
- [16] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>