

Proper 8

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June 29, 2003

Prayer of the Day

O God, you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lamentations 3:22-33

{22} The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; {23} they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. {24} "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." {25} The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. {26} It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. {27} It is good for one to bear the yoke in youth, {28} to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it, {29} to put one's mouth to the dust (there may yet be hope), {30} to give one's cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults. {31} For the Lord will not reject forever. {32} Although he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; {33} for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone.

Lamentations 3:1-66 is an alphabetic Psalm with three verses assigned to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Verses 22-24 are assigned to the letter *Heth*, 25-27 to *Teth*, 28-30 to *Yod* and 31-33 to *Kaph*.

22. steadfast love: This is one of the characteristic qualities of the covenant, God's steadfast love which never ceases. This is an extension of the thought in Exodus 20:6 where Yahweh's steadfast love is restricted to the generations of those who love him. Yahweh promised that he would not withdraw his steadfast love from David's son as he had done with Saul (2 Samuel 7:15).

30. to give one's cheek to the smiter; and be filled with insults: To be struck on the cheek is a grave insult. Jesus admonishes us "Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also...." (Matthew 5:39). Our honor is not determined by those around us, but by the honor of the one we serve. Even if others humiliate and shame us, nevertheless Yahweh will not reject us forever, but will show his steadfast love.

Or

Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15; 2:23-24

{13} God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living, {14} for he created all things so that they might exist; the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them, and the dominion of Hades is not on earth. {15} For righteousness is immortal.... {23} for God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity, {24} but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it.

13. God did not make death: "In the light of the author of Wild's Platonist view of the relationship of body and soul revealed in 9:15 [for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind], it is likely that he is here referring to spiritual rather than to physical death." [1]

does not delight in the death of the living: This is clear throughout Scripture (for example Ezekiel 18:23, 32). The word translated "death" is literally "destruction," which in the Synoptic, and especially in Paul and John... is used for eternal destruction (Matt 7:13; Rom 9:22; Philip 1:128; I Tim 6:9; John 17:12. "What is meant here is not simple extinction of

existence, but an everlasting state of torment and death." [2]

14. *destructive poison*: Like the poison in the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which introduced Adam and Eve to the poison of death.

the dominion of Hades is not on earth: The kingdom of Hades is the underworld. In John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11, the ruler of this world is Jesus' adversary.

23. *God...made us in the image of his own eternity*: God's image is expressed in his everlastingness. And we, being created in that image, were intended to be immortal. In the Genesis story human beings were not intended to be immortal, though it was a possibility. To "live forever" was the consequence of eating the fruit of the Tree of Life. After the fall God cut off access to the Tree of Life ensuring that humans were mortal.

24. *through the devil's envy death entered the world*: "With a heavy sigh, the devil spoke: 'O Adam! All my hostility, envy, and sorrow is for thee, since it is for thee that I have been expelled from my glory'" (*Vita Adae* 12:1). "If the allusion of our verse is to Genesis 3, as is most likely, it is one of the earliest extant Jewish texts to equate the serpent with the devil." [3]

those who belong to his company experience it: Sinless human beings would be immortal. But since we all die, we must all belong to the devil's company.

Psalm 30

{1} I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me. {2} O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. {3} O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit. {4} Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. {5} For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. {6} As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved." {7} By your favor, O LORD, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed. {8} To you, O LORD, I cried, and to the LORD I made supplication: {9} "What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? {10} Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me! O LORD, be my helper!" {11} You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, {12} so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

Psalm 30 is a song of thanksgiving of an individual. The title calls it "A Song at the dedication of the temple, the festival of Hanukkah.

1: The singer declares his/her intention to praise Yahweh for his intervention in the singer's misfortunes; his/her enemies have not rejoiced over him/her.

3. *soul*: The word is *nephesh*, the breath that sustains life. Here, by synecdoche, it encompasses life itself.

Sheol: The place of the dead. A "soulless, shadowy existence which is far, far removed from God." [4]

the Pit: "[*bor*]" is a figurative expression that allows the concepts of grave and [*sheol*] to coincide." [5]

4: The exhortation to the "saints" to sing praises to Yahweh refers to the setting of the Psalm in the Temple where other worshippers witnessed the performance of the thanksgiving song (perhaps with more explicit details of both the singer's situation and Yahweh's help) and then joined in praising God for his help.

5: Time is relative to the activity which fills it. "Once Yahweh has granted help, the time in which God was angry, in which he 'hid his face' (v. 7) and let the psalmist suffer in the 'realm of death,' shrinks down to a brief moment (rg' [a moment]), whereas the extension of grace fills and determines the duration of a lifetime (cf. Isa. 54:7-8).... Distress and weeping turn out to be events of yesterday, of the past. With the new morning, the point in time of Yahweh's intervention (cf. Ps. 46:5; 90:14; 143:8), jubilation breaks out as the spirit that determines the meaning of life henceforth. A person's relation to time is in the OT

definitely determined by his nearness to God (Ps. 84:10)." [6]

6-8. *I shall never be moved*: The singer describes his/her confidence, because of Yahweh's favor, and his/her dismay when Yahweh "hid his face," withdrew that favor. Complacency belongs to the fool (Proverbs 1:32). Though the singer had apparently done nothing wrong, Yahweh still withheld his support.

9. *What profit...tell of your faithfulness?*: "This unique motive for intervening presented to God in the plea reveals the psalmist's understanding of his life. The purpose of his existence is the praise of God. The only reason advanced for Yahweh's rescue...is that this praise should not be extinguished." [7]

12: The praise which would have been lost is now expressed, and the singer vows ongoing thanksgiving.

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

{7} Now as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you --so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. {8} I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. {9} For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. {10} And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something-- {11} now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. {12} For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has--not according to what one does not have. {13} I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between {14} your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. {15} As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.

7. *this generous undertaking*: The collection for the "poor" in Jerusalem. In 8:1-7 he has told the Corinthians about the response of the churches in Macedonia. Paul encourages the Corinthians to "excel" in their response.

9. *by his poverty you might become rich*: This is the principle of grace which ungirds all Christian social action. Neither merit, nor good judgment, nor gratitude, nor even relative need are really the significant factors, but rather the example of Christ, or of others who imitate the example of Christ.

10. *you...began last year*: This refers back to 1 Corinthians 16:1ff, where Paul tells the Corinthians how to go about gathering the money for the collection.

13. *a fair balance*: "One essential form of equality is the proportional, in which the few are regarded as equal to the many, and the small to the greater. This is often employed by states on special occasions when they order each citizen to make an equal contribution from his property, not or course numerically equal, but equal in the sense that it is proportionate to the valuation of his estate..." [8] Here the proportionality is based on the example of the Macedonians, who graciously gave beyond their means as a response to God's grace towards them

14. *your present abundance*: In describing the response of the Macedonian churches Paul emphasized their generosity in the face of their extreme poverty. The Corinthians, by contrast, have abundance, implying that they should be even more generous.

their abundance for your need: There will be a time when the Corinthians will be in need, and then others will give generously out of their abundance.

15. *As it is written*: Exodus 16:18, in reference to gathering the manna.

Mark 5:21-43

{21} When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. {22} Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when

he saw him, fell at his feet {23} and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." {24} So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. {25} Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. {26} She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. {27} She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, {28} for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." {29} Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. {30} Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" {31} And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" {32} He looked all around to see who had done it. {33} But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. {34} He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." {35} While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" {36} But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." {37} He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. {38} When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. {39} When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." {40} And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. {41} He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" {42} And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. {43} He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

22. one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus: See John 3:1, "Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews." Although Jesus was not in favor with the religious leadership some of that leadership sought his services, in the case of Nicodemus, secretly, but here quite openly.

25. a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years: See verse 42. The woman interrupts Jesus attempt to restore Jairus' daughter to health. "A person with a flow of blood would have been considered unclean and hence would have been ostracized from the community." The woman had consulted physicians, who were used primarily by the elite, and she was probably a widow since she spent the money herself. [9]

34. go in peace and be healed of your disease: Although the hemorrhage had stopped the disease that caused it had not yet been healed.

41. Talitha cum: A transliteration of the Aramaic [*talitha qum*]. Mark has several such transliterations: 3:17; 7:11,34; 9:9f; 14:36; 15:22, 34.

42. she was twelve years of age: Jairus' daughter was born at approximately the same time the woman's hemorrhages began. "A twelve-year old dying would have been a common occurrence in antiquity. Through much of the first century, 60 percent of the persons born alive had died by the mid-teens." [10]

43. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this: How the girl's recovery or Jesus' involvement in it was to be kept secret is not clear.

told them to give her something to eat: Eating with her family marks the girl's re-incorporation into her family and the community. [11] After the resurrection Jesus ate a piece of fish (Luke 24:42).

Reflection

The Prayer of the Day reminds us that God has prepared for us "joys beyond understanding" for those who love him. We pray that we may receive the fulfillment of his promises which are beyond our comprehension.

The lessons reflect the reality of suffering and death as a part of human experience. These are not necessarily expressions of God's intentions. The implication seems to be that they are the ordinary consequence of our actions. God is compassionate and will overcome suffering, and even death. In times of need or pain we may be sure that God hears our

prayers and answers them. What do we say in those cases where our prayers are not answered? God had other plans? God answered, but the answer is not what we expected? We did not pray hard enough, or were not deserving enough; we did not love him enough? What about our prayers for others?

We have many opportunities to come to the aid of our brothers and sisters in their need, and use our resources to relieve their suffering as Paul urged the Corinthians to do. These opportunities are a test of our love. John reminds us that we cannot love God, whom we have not seen, if we do not love our brother or sister, whom we have seen. Sometimes God's answer to prayer fails because his agents (we) fail to carry out his intentions.

Jesus' admonition not to let others know about the resurrection of the little girl suggests that we should also avoid publicity for our good deeds, "and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:3).

Hymns [12]

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

427 E O Jesus Christ,
360 D O Christ, the
711s P Psalm 130: Out
408 II God, Whose Giving

431 G Your Hand, O
425 G O God of Mercy,
435, 148, 823s/738v, 290

Prayers of the People [13]

Gracious God, we marvel at your patience with your servants. Bring the power of your Holy Spirit into our lives that like the woman in the crowd, we may trust you in Christ Jesus, above all others. Enable us to rise up and serve you wholeheartedly. Brighten the eyes of our faith that we might live so that the life of Jesus is visible in our bodies. God who knows us better than we know ourselves hear our prayer.

We thank and praise you for your Word to us in Scripture and your Word to us which is Jesus Christ. Let your Holy Spirit speak to us through Word that we might understand enough for the day and walk faithfully in that understanding. God who knows us better than we know ourselves hear our prayer.

Bless, O God, Bishop Pryse and the gathering of the Eastern Synod in convention this next week. Give vision for planning, courage for action and a deep sense of being participants in the life of the whole body of Christ. God who knows us better than we know ourselves hear our prayer.

Or [14]

Presider or deacon

Let us offer prayers to God for the healing touch of Christ among all peoples.

Deacon or other leader

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

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

For mercy, peace, and justice in the world.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, the poor and the oppressed, travelers and prisoners.

For the dying and the dead.

For ourselves, our families, our companions, and all those we love.

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

Presider

Generous and life-giving God, whose Son became poor for our sake, hear the prayers we

offer this day and pour your abundance on all your people, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

- [1] David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1979, p. 107.
- [2] Oepke, “*επέλεια* [*apoleia*],” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (ed. by Gerhard Kittel). Vol. I. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964, p. 396.
- [3] Winston, *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- [4] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*, Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1988, p. 162.
- [5] *Ibid.*, p. 355.
- [6] *Loc. cit.*
- [7] *Ibid.*, p. 356.
- [8] Philo, *Who is the Heir*, 145.
- [9] Bruce Malina & Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, p. 210.
- [10] *Ibid.*, p. 209.
- [11] *Loc. cit.*
- [12] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclb9900.txt>
- [13] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray_b2.txt
- [14] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>