

Proper 22



Prayer of the Day

Our Lord Jesus, you have endured the doubts and foolish questions of every generation. Forgive us for trying to be judge over you, and grant us the confident faith to acknowledge you as Lord.

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

{1} The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw. {2} O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? {3} Why do you make me see wrong-doing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. {4} So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous—therefore judgment comes forth perverted.... {2:1} I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint. {2} Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. {3} For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. {4} Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

This is the only lection from Habakkuk in the three years of the lectionary.

2:1. I will stand at my watchpost...the rampart: In Isaiah 21:8 the prophet also waits at a watchpost. "This language probably derives from a widespread self-understanding of the prophet as a spiritual watchman for the people. Ezekiel spells out this concept of the prophet as watchman (*sopeh*) in detail (Ezek. 3:17; 33:7), but the concept is neither unique to nor original with Ezekiel (see Jer. 6:17; Micah 7:7; cf. Ps. 5:4 [3])." [1]

2. Write the vision: The vision is to be written down as a witness for the future. See Isaiah 30:8. But in the reading no vision is offered.

so that a runner may read it: The writing is to be large so it will be easy to read.

3. a vision for the appointed time: The vision is for the future and it will be fulfilled at the appointed time.

4: "After this admonition to patiently await the fulfillment of the vision, the vision itself is still not related; there follows instead a portrayal of two contrasting responses to the vision." [2] The final clause is quoted in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38.

Psalms 37:1-9

{1} Do not fret because of the wicked; do not be envious of wrongdoers, {2} for they will soon fade like the grass, and wither like the green herb. {3} Trust in the LORD, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security. {4} Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. {5} Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. {6} He will make your vindication shine like the light, and the justice of your cause like the noonday. {7} Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him; do not fret over those who prosper in their way, over those who carry out evil devices. {8} Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath. Do not fret—it leads only to evil. {9} For the wicked shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

1-2. Do not fret because of the wicked: The singer admonishes the righteous not to be envious of the wicked because they will fade and wither. This theme is taken up again in verse 7-9. Judgment and punishment are not the responsibility of human agencies. Yahweh will act in his own time.

3-7. Trust in the Lord.... Take delight in the Lord.... Be still before the Lord.... Wait for

the Lord: The psalmist encourages his auditors not to be impatient but to put their trust in Yahweh.

7-8. *Do not fret—it leads only to evil:* The righteous are to be concerned with their own behavior, not with the behavior of the wicked. They are to refrain from anger and forsake wrath.

2 Timothy 1:1-14

{1} Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, {2} To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. {3} I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. {4} Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. {5} I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. {6} For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; {7} for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. {8} Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, {9} who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, {10} but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. {11} For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, {12} and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. {13} Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. {14} Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

3. *I am grateful to God—whom I worship...as my ancestors did:* "in one sense his [Paul's] acceptance of Christ as his Saviour represented a complete break with his ancestral piety, in another sense it was its proper development and flowering." [3]

5. *your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice:* According to Acts 16:1 Timothy was "the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer," which is ambiguous, although in the context it is probable that she was a Christian. "what dominates is rather the concept of a religious upbringing," [4] whether Jewish or Christian. Paul had Timothy circumcised so the Jews who knew his father was a Greek would not be offended (Acts 16:3). Timothy, like Paul, reflects the faith of his ancestors.

7. *a spirit of cowardice...spirit of power:* "because the spirit of Christ is not a spirit of fear, therefore the Christian should use his 'gift' ([*charisma*] bravely." See also Romans 8:15. [5]

10. *the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus:* The Greek for "appearing" is *epiphaneia*, "epiphany." It means "the appearance of a divinity that is otherwise hidden, manifested as a *deus praesens* either in a vision, by a healing or some other helping action, or by any manifestation of power.... the emphasis is not on revelations in myth, but rather on events in history and in the present...." [6] It is Jesus' earthly life, in which he "brought life and immortality to light," that is referred to here as an "epiphany."

13-14. *the standard of sound teaching...the good treasure:* Both refer to the Gospel as it was taught by Paul, who "was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher" (vs. 11).

Luke 17:5-10

{5} The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" {6} The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. {7} "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? {8} Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'? {9} Do you thank the slave for doing what was

commanded? {10} So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'"

5. *"Increase our faith!"*: Whatever Jesus said has to be understood as a response to the request of the apostles, "Increase our faith!"

10. *worthless slaves*: "...the Greek word translated 'unprofitable' or 'worthless' (NRS) in v. 10 is rather doubtful here. The word literally means 'without need,' an idiomatic Middle Eastern phrase that in medieval Arabic translations as well as in the *Harclean Syriac* (seventh century) means one is 'owed nothing.'" [7] "...this verse draws the conclusion from what has been said since 16.1 and especially in vv. 1-9: the disciples have a duty to do the will of God." [8]

Reflection

The natural attitude of human beings is that we know the answer to all situations, and that answer will advance our desires and intentions. We are impatient and insistent for our answers to be accepted by others and especially by God. We set ourselves up as judge over God. The lessons challenge that attitude. Habakkuk was impatient, too, and he was told to wait patiently for his vision to be fulfilled. The Psalm reinforces this advice: "Don't fret...Trust the Lord...Wait patiently for him. The wicked will be cut off. Those who trust the Lord will inherit. The focus changes somewhat in the second lesson from patience to self-discipline and courage. Though we may suffer we should not be ashamed of the Gospel. Our faith is in the one who brought abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. Finally, in the Gospel, we are reminded that our task is to do all that we are charged with. All we need is faith the size of a mustard seed. God will do all the real work. What is not said, but still true, is that all of God's promises will be fulfilled for us. We are patient and courageous waiting for the fulfillment of the vision.

Hymns [9]

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

250 --E--Open Now Thy
479 --D--My Faith Looks
230 --II--Lord, Keep Us

257 --II--Holy Spirit, Truth
507, 388, 483, 801s/768v

Prayers of the People [10]

P or A: Living in an unsettled world, it is difficult to hope for better times. We pray to God for the forgiveness of our sins which contribute to the world's pain. We also ask for the courage to live in love and hope as Jesus taught. We pray, "Lord, have mercy", and respond, "Hear our prayer."

A: Like the ancient Israelites, the church today has little influence in a world of many competing powers. Protect your chosen ones, that we might be faithful to you despite temptations to lead faithless lives. Lord, in your mercy. Hear...

A: Your people Israel were sent into exile, having no home and suffering much affliction. We remember all refugees in our prayers today, asking that they be gathered to you. Open the arms of our nation to receive those who are persecuted in their native lands. Lord, in your mercy. Hear...

A: May the people of this congregation come to treasure your word, and learn from it of our new life in Christ. Inspire us to invite others to join with us. Lord, in your mercy. Hear...

A: Relieve the sick, shut-in and dying of their pain and suffering. We pray especially for those who are in ill health: _____. Lord, in your mercy. Hear...

A: Lord God, keep us humble in our actions so that we do not appear self-righteous to others. Make us instead models of the humility and love that grow from our faith in you. Lord, in your mercy. Hear...

P: We commend all for whom we pray into your hands, trusting in your love and mercy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Or [11]

Presider or deacon

Let us pray with unwavering firmness and offer petitions for all in need.

Deacon or other leader For all who gather in the faith of Christ.

For the world and all peoples of the earth, children of God and members of the human family.

For the good earth and its fragile resources.

For the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea.

For the married people of our community, and for those who have experienced the pain of divorce.

For all whose lives are marked by sickness and suffering destruction and violence, strife and contention.

For those who have died in Christ and for all the dead.

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

Presider

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gives us a spirit of love and self-discipline, hear our prayers for mercy and guard your people in time of trial, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

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[1] J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991, p. 108

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[3] J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963, pp. 155 f.

[4] Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972, p. 98.

[5] *Loc. cit.*

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

[7] Bruce Melina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, pp. 378 f.

[8] Gerd Lüdemann, *Jesus after Two Thousand Years: What he really said and did*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2001, p. 371.

[9] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc0001.txt>

[10] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_c.txt

[11] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>



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