

Proper 24

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October 19, 2003

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 53:4-12

{4} Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. {5} But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. {6} All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. {7} He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. {8} By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. {9} They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. {10} Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. {11} Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. {12} Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) includes an introduction (52:13-15); an historical review of the Servant's career (53:1-9); and an announcement of the glorious future of the Servant (52:10-12). The whole passage is used on Good Friday. The historical connection with the sufferings of the prophet Isaiah, or the identity of the Servant with the nation, Israel, is seen by Christians as an anticipation of the sufferings of Jesus.

4. *Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases*: The Servant vicariously suffered our infirmities and diseases.

we accounted him stricken...: We thought his sufferings were his own, and the proper reward for sinful behavior. "...the prominent feature of the description is the meek and submissive demeanour of the Servant under his undeserved sufferings." [1]

5-6: These verses explore more deeply the causes of his sufferings and their consequences for us.

7. *like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth*: See Jeremiah 11:19 for the same image.

8-9: The injustice and the substitutionary nature of his suffering is noted, as well as the dishonor of his burial.

10-12: "The main thought...is that the Servant is to be the instrument in establishing the true religion, by removing the burden of guilt and bringing many to righteousness. As the reward of his sufferings he will enjoy a brilliant future and have a numerous spiritual offspring. He will become a great power in the world, attaining a position like that of a mighty conqueror. The idea of a resurrection from the dead appears to be necessarily

implied." [2]

Psalm 91:9-16

{9} Because you have made the LORD your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place, {10} no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. {11} For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. {12} On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. {13} You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot. {14} Those who love me, I will deliver; I will protect those who know my name. {15} When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them. {16} With long life I will satisfy them, and show them my salvation.

9. you have made the Lord your refuge: A persecuted person takes shelter in Yahweh and is protected against all evil.

11-12: These verses were quoted by the devil in Matthew 4:6 and Luke 4:10f. as a temptation to test the promises of God. The angels are the guardian angels who protect one who has taken refuge in Yahweh.

13: "...the boldest of all statements, namely v. 13, was by Jesus himself promised to the disciples that were sent out. [Luke 10:19]" [3]

14-16: Yahweh speaks directly to the one who has called on him.

14. those who know my name: To know someone's name is to be intimately associated with them.

16. long life: In a time when life was short, a long life was considered a sign of God's favor. Solomon was commended by Yahweh because he did not ask for long life (1 Kings 3:11).

Hebrews 5:1-10

{1} Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. {2} He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; {3} and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. {4} And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. {5} So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; {6} as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek." {7} In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. {8} Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; {9} and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, {10} having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

1: The high priest functions on behalf of the people.

2: Because the high priest is human and subject to human weakness he is able to deal gently with those he serves.

4. one does not presume to take this honor: In the first century Mediterranean culture in which Jesus lived and the New Testament was written, one's value depended much more on what people thought of you, than on what you thought of yourself. And, indeed, one was chosen for a task because of the honor others ascribed to one because of his or her background, parentage, social class, or record of service, or the status one had acquired by service to others.

5. Christ...was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you: The word Christ is not a name, but an ascription of honor. It means "messiah" and was used of the prince-regent, who had been anointed with holy oil and ruled jointly with his father. The writer makes a claim for Jesus on his behalf by quoting Psalm 2:7, which described the Davidic king in these words.

6. You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. This is a quotation from Psalm 110:4, and refers to the transfer of the priestly authority of Melchizedek and his

successors to the Judahite kings who replaced them. Melchizedek was the priest-king of Salem (Jerusalem) in the days of Abraham (Genesis 18:14). In the mind of the writer of Hebrews Jesus has now become the priest-king of his people. These verses (5-6) are two key verses in the Christology of Hebrews. Melchizedek is dealt in detail in chapter 7 of Hebrews; most of that chapter is omitted from the lectionary.

7-8: The days of Jesus' humanity was a time of suffering as a high-priest and prayers to the one "who was able to save him from death." Not the death on the cross, for that Jesus did experience, but the eternal death of the wicked. He learned obedience through suffering; "he was obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).

9: The result of Jesus "having been made perfect" is "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."

10. *a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek*: This closes the section that was opened with the same words in verse 6.

Mark 10:35-45

{35} James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." {36} And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" {37} And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." {38} But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" {39} They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; {40} but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." {41} When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. {42} So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. {43} But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, {44} and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. {45} For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

35-37: In Matthew it is mother of the sons of Zebedee who makes the request of Jesus that they should sit with him in his glory.

38. *You do not know what you are asking*: James and John see possibility of achieving status by being at Jesus' side in his glory, but they are not aware of what Jesus will endure before he enters his glory, even though they have just heard Jesus tell them that he will be arrested and condemned to death, mock, insulted, beaten and killed, and only then be rise on the third day.

The cup I drink...the baptism that I am baptized with: "In the OT the cup is the symbol both of joy (Psa. xxii. (xxiii.) 5, cxv. 4 (cxvi,13)) and of retribution and suffering (Psa. lxxiv. (lxxv.) 9, Isa. li.17-22, Jer. xxxii.1 (xxv.15), Ezek. xxiii.31-34). Here the idea is that of Messianic redemptive suffering (cf. viii.31, etc.). The cup is one which Jesus Himself is drinking.... The figure of baptism expresses the same idea.... The use of the symbolism of water for the idea of calamity is frequent in the OT; cf. Psa. xlii.7, lxix.2, 25, Isa. xliii.2." [4]

39. *The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized*: "...Jesus prophesied that, like Himself, James and John should endure great tribulation and suffering. Although James was martyred, martyrdom is not exclusively meant, or even necessarily implied for the NT does not use the imagery of baptism in this sense, and it is not found in Christian usage until the turn of the second century." [5]

40. *to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant*: God is the patron, Jesus is the broker, and the people, including the disciples, are the clients. Jesus cannot grant the honors James and John asked for, because they are not his to give.

41. *the ten...began to be angry with James and John*: The other ten disciples did not seek honor according to the lesson in Hebrews. James and John did, and the rest were angry at their presumption.

42-44: "In renewed Israel, the great are those who function as servants at ceremonial meals (deacons), and the first are those who have slave status. These reversals substitute a generalized reciprocity typical of household relations for the balanced reciprocity common to public affairs." [6]

45: Why is the reversal of status required within the community of believers? Because the life of the community is based on the life of Jesus. He served others and gave his life as a ransom. How could Jesus do that? Because his status was of higher value than those whom he ransomed. A king is worth many nobles and citizens in ransom.

Reflection

Greatness in the kingdom is not measured by the same standards as greatness in the world, nor are the rewards of greatness the same as in the world. Jesus has made atonement for our sins, and now he will protect us from the dangers we face as his disciples. We shall share Jesus' sufferings, but recognition must not be our goal. We need to learn what Jesus meant when he said, "...whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all."

Hymns [7]

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,	24 --G--Come, O Precious
122 --D--Love Consecrates the	283 --G--O God, Send
483 --I--God Moves in	736v --G--By Gracious Powers
524 --P--My God, How	765v --G--Jesu, Jesu (803s)
183, 423, 492	

Prayers of the People [8]

O Lord our God, you are very great. Like Job we hold you to nothing except your promises. In Christ we have come to know you as self-giving. We praise and thank you for this self-giving Jesus who models for us by his own life our own call to serve. Enable us to follow. We need the grace and courage of your Holy Spirit to fulfill your call to service. God of creation and self-giving hear our prayer.

Encourage and nurture the Bishops of this Church that they might serve you with integrity. They serve you as pastors to the whole Church. Grace them with a humble spirit, insight into their call and courage to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Bless them as they meet in their own conference and then with the Bishops of the Anglican Church this week. God of creation and self-giving hear our prayer.

Or [9]

Presider or deacon

Let us approach the throne of grace and pray in the name of Jesus, who bore the sins of many.

Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place. For all peoples and their leaders, 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, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

Source of eternal salvation, who gave us a great high priest in heaven, hear the prayers of your servants and let all your beings sing for joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

[1] J. Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah: Chapters XL-LXVI*: Cambridge University Press, 1954, p.142.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 146.

[3] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, p. 225.

[4] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1955, pp. 440f.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 441.

[6] Bruce Malina & Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, p. p. 246. “(1) Generalized reciprocity: open sharing based on generosity or need. Return was often postponed or forgotten.... characterizes family relations and those with...friends, fellow members of associations. (2) Balanced reciprocity: exchange based on symmetrical concern for the interests of both parties. Here return was expected in equal measure.” *Loc. cit.*

[7] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclb9900.txt>

[8] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray_b2.txt

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