



March 31, 2002

Prayer of the Day

O God, you gave your only Son to suffer death on the cross for our redemption, and by his glorious resurrection you delivered us from the power of death. Make us die every day to sin, so that we may live with him forever in the joy of the resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

Or Almighty God, through your only Son you overcame death and opened for us the gate of everlasting life. Give us your continual help; put good desires into our minds and bring them to full effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Acts 10:34-43

{34} Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, {35} but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. {36} You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. {37} That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: {38} how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. {39} We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; {40} but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, {41} not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. {42} He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. {43} All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

34. God shows no partiality: For the early church, indeed for the church at any time, this principle is primary. "...both Luke and Paul basically agree about God's impartiality toward Jews and law-free Gentiles and the justified evangelization of the Gentiles...."

[1] See Romans 2:10-11. Peter also learned that God's grace is not limited to the people of Israel. This lesson was not easily learned, nor always honored. Jesus, himself, said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24)".

35. anyone who fears him and does what is right: The criterion is to "fear God" and to do his will, basically putting one's faith in Jesus Christ by whom peace was preached.

36. the message he sent to the people of Israel: peace: "'Peace' expresses not just the absence of war..., but [*shalom*], the state of bounty or well-being that comes from God and includes concord, harmony, order, security, and prosperity." [2]

37-39: "Verses 37-39 give a résumé of the Lucan kerygma, a recital of Jesus' ministry that is very close to the thrust of the Lucan Gospel itself." [3]

39. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree: See Acts 5:30, "The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree." Jesus was not only killed but he was dishonored (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). Paul also refers to Deuteronomy in Galatians 3:13.

40. but God raised him...: The resurrection was also a part of the primitive preaching of the apostles. By raising him God ascribed to him ultimate honor.

on the third day: Lazarus was in the grave for four days (John 11:39). Nevertheless, "The date of the 'raising' is not important; the fact that the Father raised him is!" [4] 40-42. *allowed him to appear; not to all the people but to us who were chosen... commanded us to preach to the people and to testify...All the prophets testify about him.....*: Literally, "God...made him manifest." Jesus honored the disciples by appearing to them. They, in turn, honor Jesus by testifying to him as the prophets did.
42. *he is the one ordained by God as judge*: See Matthew 25:31ff.: Jesus did not only come to preach and teach and heal during his earthly life, but he would return as the judge of the last times.

Or Jeremiah 31:1-6

{1} At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. {2} Thus says the LORD: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, {3} the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. {4} Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall take your tambourines, and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers. {5} Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy the fruit. {6} For there shall be a day when sentinels will call in the hill country of Ephraim: "Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God."

1. *At that time*: When Yahweh restores the fortunes of the tents of Jacob (Jeremiah 30:18).

I will be the[ir] God...and they shall be my people: A covenant formula. See Leviticus 26:11-12. It occurs in Jeremiah 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:28.

2. *The people who survived the sword*: Leviticus 26 (seen in the note above) describes the fate of those who keep and those who do not keep Yahweh's commandments and statutes. Those who survive Yahweh's wrath will flee as though fleeing from the sword, and they shall perish among the nations (Leviticus 26: 36-39). Now Yahweh is merciful and grants them grace.

3. *I have loved you with an everlasting love*: See Isaiah 54:8: "In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer."

4. *I will build you*: In Jeremiah 42:8 Yahweh declares that he is sorry for the disaster he brought upon Judah: "...I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I am sorry for the disaster that I have brought upon you."

O virgin Israel: Also in Jeremiah 18:13 and 31:21. There is a progression in these passages from doing a "most horrible thing" (18:13) to "I will build you again" (31:4) to "Return, O virgin Israel, return to these your cities" (31:21). "In the expressions *bethulah yisra'el*, 'the virgin Israel' (Jer. 18:13 + 3 times), *bethulath bath 'ammi*, 'the virgin daughter of my people,' *bethulath bath yehudhah*, 'virgin daughter of Judah,' *bethulath bath tsiyyon*, 'virgin daughter of Zion,' ...all of which are personifications of a nation, a city, or a land, *bethulah* is probably not intended to refer to virginity; these expressions are expansions or playful modifications of the frequent two word expressions... 'daughter of Judah,' It is a mistake to look for a deep religious idea in *bethulath bath tsiyyon*, 'virgin daughter of Zion,' etc., as is clear from frequent counterparts like *bethulath bath babhel*, 'virgin daughter of Babylon [Isaiah 47:10],' etc." [5]

6. *For there shall be a day when sentinels will call in the hill country of Ephraim: "Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God"*: "The verse is significant. It shows that in the days of Josiah the young Jeremiah looked forward to the cultic unification of Israel, with northern Israel coming to Zion to worship. In the light of this verse (and other evidence) one can hardly believe that Jeremiah was in principle opposed to the

cult or hostile to the aims of Josiah's reform." [6]

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

{1} O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! {2} Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever...." {14} The LORD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. {15} There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the LORD does valiantly; {16} the right hand of the LORD is exalted; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly." {17} I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD. {18} The LORD has punished me severely, but he did not give me over to death. {19} Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. {20} This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. {21} I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. {22} The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. {23} This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. {24} This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

1-2: These verses are a part of the liturgical introduction to the Psalm. The invitation to the house of Aaron and those who fear the LORD also to say, "His steadfast love endures forever," have been passed over (verses 3-4).

14. *The Lord...has become my salvation*: A quotation of Exodus 15:2 (see also Isaiah 12:2).

15. *glad songs of victory*: The quotation is intended to represent these "glad songs." "In vv. 15-16 we might have an ancient song of victory that was sung after a battle that had had a fortunate ending.... The 'lifting of the right hand' could point back to an old gesture: after the battle the victor lifts his right hand and thereby attests his powerful superiority." [7]

17-21. The Psalmist has been brought to the point of death, he/she has been severely punished, but Yahweh has answered his/her prayer and relieved the punishment.

18: The singer has suffered at the hands of Yahweh (verses 5, 13 and 18), but he will not die (17-18).

19. *the gates of righteousness*: "At the gates leading to the sanctuary inquiry is made about the...[*tsedaqah*, "righteousness"] of each participant in worship.... The... [*tesediqim*, "righteous"] may enter (v. 20b; Isa 26:20).

21. *I thank you that you...have become my salvation*: The singer enters the sanctuary and thanks Yahweh for his/her salvation.

22-23: The singer's companions "express their amazement at the rescue of the person threatened by death." [8]

the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone: "The wondrous change in life is commemorated in a graphic picture. He who was cast into the realm of death was like a stone which the builders threw away as unfit. Yet this stone has achieved the honor of becoming the 'cornerstone'.... a despised stone has come to a prominent and important position. "Verse 22 is very likely a proverb that emphatically bears witness to the wondrous change wrought by Yahweh (v. 23). One who was despised has been brought to honors. One who was consigned to death is allowed to see life (v. 17a).... That v. 22 is in the NT applied to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is implicitly intelligible on the basis of the intention of the OT text (cf. Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; but cf. also Isa. 28:16 and 1 Peter 2:6f.). The early church read Psalm 118 as a prophetic witness to the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ." [9]

24. *This is the day that the Lord has made*: A festival day for the singer, for punishment has turned to forgiveness and exaltation.

Colossians 3:1-4

{1} So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. {2} Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on

earth, {3} for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. {4} When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

1. things that are above: The things above are contrasted with "things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2). See also Philippians 3:19-20. In Galatians 4:26 Paul speaks of "the Jerusalem above." The image of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven in Revelation is a metaphor for the presence of God with his people.

Christ seated at the right hand of God: This is a mark of status (for example Matthew 22:44 or Matthew 20:21).

3. you have died: We have died with Christ in baptism, "But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him (Romans 6:8).

your life is hidden with Christ in God: All treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ (Colossians 2:2-3.) Christ and our life are hidden in God.

4: "What has already been accomplished 'above,' that is in God's world, will only become visible 'on earth' at some point in the future. Therefore the community lives fully orientated upwards, 'above,' where their future lies. That is, they look to their Lord for everything, for it is he who at some point will lay bare and fulfil (*sic*) what is already effective for them now...."

See above for Acts 10:34-43 the alternate second lesson.

John 20:1-18

{1} Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. {2} So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." {3} Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. {4} The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. {5} He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. {6} Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, {7} and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. {8} Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; {9} for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. {10} Then the disciples returned to their homes. {11} But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; {12} and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. {13} They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." {14} When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. {15} Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." {16} Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). {17} Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" {18} Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

1. the first day of the week: The beginning of a new creation.

the stone had been removed from the tomb: The stone at Jesus tomb is not referred to before in John. The stone at Lazarus' tomb is also mentioned (11:39, 41).

2: Mary did not check inside the tomb.

the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved: This person is not identified by the writer of the Gospel. Tradition identifies this disciple with "John," the evangelist. Floyd Filson suggests that he was Lazarus, of whom it is said that Jesus loved him (11:3).

3-10: The description of the Peter and the other disciple has been seen as a reflection of a contest for leadership in the early church. They both looked in, then the other disciple

went in and "he saw and believed" (cf. 9:37-38: Jesus said, "You have seen him".... He said, "Lord, I believe.") But then they simply go home.

11-13: Mary weeps, sees two angels, and makes her complaint.

14-17: Mary is confronted by Jesus, and complains to him, then she recognizes him. He instructs her to tell "my brothers" "that Jesus is ascending to God." Jesus does not immediately ascend.

18: Mary tells the disciples what she has seen and heard.

Or Matthew 28:1-10

{1} After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. {2} And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. {3} His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. {4} For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. {5} But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. {6} He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. {7} Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." {8} So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. {9} Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. {10} Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

1. as the first day of the week was dawning: Mark says, "when the sun had risen," and Luke has "at early dawn."

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary: Mark identifies "the other Mary" as "Mary the mother of James" (Mark 15:40 says James the younger), and adds Salome, whom Matthew identifies as "the mother of the sons of Zebedee," that is, James and John (compare Mark 15:40 with Matthew 27:56). Luke adds Johanna by name and mentions "other women" also (Luke 24:10). In John Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb alone.

2. a great earthquake...an angel of the Lord: There was an earthquake when Jesus died (Matthew 27:54), now there is another. When Paul and his associates were imprisoned in Philippi, they were freed by an earthquake (Acts 16:26). Earthquakes are quite common in the Revelation of St. John (6:12; 8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18). The appearance of a being from the spiritual world is accompanied by the shaking of the earth. It is one rather than Luke's two and specifically an angel rather than "a young man" (Mark), or "two men" (Luke).

rolled back the stone: In Mark and Luke the stone is rolled away when they arrive. In Mark the women had wondered who would roll the stone away.

and sat on it: The angel's action in sitting on the stone indicates his disdain for human efforts to conceal the acts of God. The women encounter the angel outside the tomb. In the other accounts they enter the tomb first.

3: The appearance of the angel is described: "like lightning...clothing white as snow." This is similar to Jesus' transfigured appearance in Matthew 17:2. The appearance of the risen Jesus is described in Revelation 1:14-15.

4. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men: Only Matthew mentions the presence of the guards. They reappear in Matthew 28:11-15 where they connive with the authorities to explain the missing body as a theft by the disciples.

5. Do not be afraid: Mark has "Do not be amazed." Luke describes the women as perplexed, and the men dressed in dazzling apparel scold them for seeking "the living among the dead."

6. Come see the place where he lay: The angel has been speaking to the women outside the tomb. Now they are invited to see where he had lain in the tomb.

7. tell his disciples: Matthew omits Mark's explicit mention of Peter (Mark 16:7) .

8. *he is going before you to Galilee, there you will see him*: Jesus said he would do this in Matthew 26:32. This is the same as Mark, but differs from Luke which changes the direction to go to Galilee to Jesus telling the disciples "while he was still in Galilee."

they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy: They are afraid in spite of the angel's admonition not to be. But their fear is tempered with great joy.

9. *Suddenly Jesus met them*: The women are the first ones to see the risen Jesus. This is somewhat reminiscent of Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene in John's account.

10: Jesus repeats the angel's admonition not to be afraid, and the instructions to go to Galilee. Although the eleven disciples go to Galilee, Matthew does not record the women reporting to the disciples that they were to do this.

Reflection

"The discourse ([Acts] 10:34-43) is another missionary speech, which repeats a bit of the kerygma.... it is addressed to a Palestinian Gentile, a Jewish sympathizer and Godfearer, and those whom he has invited to be present.... even though it is the last great missionary speech that Peter delivers in Acts, it is the beginning of apostolic testimony being borne to Gentiles without insistence on the obligation to obey the Mosaic law. In Peter's activity in Caesarea the mission to the Gentiles is thus formally inaugurated. In its kerygmatic section the speech presents the fullest formulation of the early proclamation about Jesus in Acts...The speech, however, included another important element of apostolic testimony, viz., an explanation of God's impartiality: the Word sent to Israel is now preached to others." [11]

Psalm 118 is a song of thanksgiving by one who has been close to death, but who has survived to thank and praise God for caring for him/her.

Colossians 3:1-4 describes the life of one who has been raised with Christ already now, but in an even richer sense when Christ is revealed. When that happens we will be revealed with him in glory.

John 20:1-18 "presents many difficulties for the preacher. It is a combination of two different traditions. The one is the well attested and reliable tradition that Mary Magdalene...visited the grave of Jesus on Easter morning, found it empty and reported the fact to the disciples. The other, less attested is of Peter's visit to the grave (see Lk 24:12). (In the earliest and strongly attested tradition, Peter was the recipient of the first *appearance*.)" [12] (see 1 Corinthians 15:4-5).

Matthew 28:1-10 tells a somewhat different story of the first visit to the tomb. Several women instead of one; the fear of the guards; the instruction to go to Galilee to see Jesus. On the other hand, there are also a couple of strong similarities: no one enters the tomb (unless it was after the angel's invitation); Jesus appears to the visitors before appearing to any of the men. That Peter is not the recipient of the first appearance is contrary to the "earliest and strongly attested tradition." This is especially compelling in the light of the importance of Peter in Matthew's gospel.

Hymns [13]

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

151 E--Jesus Christ is

134 D--Christ Jesus Lay

144 D--Good Christian Friends,

710s P--Psalm 118: This

141 G--The Day of

154 G--That Easter Day

672v G--Christ Is Risen

141 G--The Day of

747v P--Christ Is Made (819s)
692v G--For All the Faithful
417, 142, 137, 139, 673v, 677v

154 G--That Easter Day
672v G--Christ Is Risen

Prayers of the People [14]

P or A: As we gather in the light of the victory of our God, may our prayers reflect our joyful trust and faith, saying "God hear our prayer," and respond, "Give your people joy."

A: We praise you for the gift of baptism that brings us into your family. Let us belong to you and one another and celebrate Christ's Word and meal with thanksgiving. God, hear our prayer, Give your people joy.

A: We praise you for the gift of peace and pray for your guidance for all nations and their leaders. May the message of Christ's victory over death bring forth concern for life and unity among all peoples. God, hear our prayer, Give your people joy.

A: We praise you for the gift of those have recently confessed their faith and been received into your holy Church. Renew us, resurrect our faith and let us encourage one another. God, hear our prayer, Give your people joy.

A: We praise you for the gift of healing which is offered to the sick and sorrowing, we remember especially _____. May the power of your resurrection refresh their hope and faith. God, hear our prayer, Give your people joy.

A: We praise you for all the gifts that you lavish on your people, especially for the forgiveness of sins won through the victory of your Son. May we all find grace in our time of need. God, hear our prayer, Give your people joy.

P: Our Deliverer and Savior, hear the prayers we offer with joy and thanksgiving to you, on this great day, through Jesus Christ, the Living One who saves us. Amen.

Or [15]

Presider or deacon

Joined by those who are newly baptized in Christ, and filled with joy on this queen of feasts, let us offer prayers to God who fills the darkness of the world with the light of Christ.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy churches of God, N our bishop, the presbyters and deacons, our new brothers and sisters, this holy gathering, and all the holy people of God.

For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people.

For all those in need, the suffering and the oppressed, travelers and prisoners, the dying and the dead.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

That our Savior may grant us triumph over our visible and invisible enemies.

That with Christ we may crush beneath our feet the prince of darkness and all evil powers.

That Christ may fill us with the joy and happiness of his holy resurrection.

That we may enter the chamber of the divine wedding feast and rejoice without limit with the angels and saints.

Remembering our most glorious and 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

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light. Hear our prayers which we offer in the hope of eternal glory, and grant that we

who have received new life in baptism may live for ever in the joy of the resurrection. Glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages.

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] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1998, p. 463.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 463.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 464.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 466.

[5] M. Tsevat, “... [bethulah],” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren). Grand Rapids, Michigan William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975, vol. II, p. 341.

[6] John Bright, *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965, p. 281.

[7] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, p. 398.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 399.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 400.

[10] Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976, p. 178.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 459.

[12] Reginald H. Fuller, *Preaching the New Lectionary: The Word of God for the Church Today*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1974, p. 24.

[13] <http://www.worship.ca/text/rcla0102.txt>

[14] http://www.worship.ca/text/int_a1.txt

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