

Proper 6

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Pentecost 4 June 16, 2002

Prayer of the Day

God, our maker and redeemer, you have made us a new company of priests to bear witness to the Gospel. Enable us to be faithful to our calling to make known your promises to all the world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Exodus 19:2-8a

{2} "They had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. {3} Then Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: {4} You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. {5} Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, {6} but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites." {7} So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. {8} The people all answered as one: "Everything that the LORD has spoken we will do."

3, *6b*: These verses bracket God's words Moses speaks to the Israelites in verse 7.

5. *if you obey my voice and keep my covenant*: Yahweh rescued the people of Israel from Egypt. Now their position as Yahweh's "treasured possession" depends on their obedience to the conditions of the covenant yet to be made between Yahweh and Israel at Sinai.

you shall be my treasured possession: According to Deuteronomy 7:7-8a, "It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors".

6. *you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation*: It is this description of Israel that more than any other characterizes her history. She was chosen to be the visible presence of Yahweh in the world. As a priestly kingdom Israel ministered in the world on behalf of all the nations. As a holy nation she exemplified in the character of Yahweh.

Psalm 100

{1} "Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. {2} Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing. {3} Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. {4} Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. {5} For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."

3. *the Lord is God*: In Joshua 22:34 the phrase is a statement of the covenant loyalty of the Reubenites and Gadites epitomized in the building of an altar called "Witness." See also Deuteronomy 4:35-39. 1 Kings 18:39.

It is he that made us, and we are his, we are his people: Responding to the declarations of the first lesson the people acknowledge whose they are and how they came to be. As we respond in the words of the Psalm, we acknowledge that God has also chosen us in a special way.

4-5. *enter his gates...his courts*: A reference to a liturgical procession into the Temple during which this Psalm was sung. See also "come into his presence with singing" in verse 2.

5. *steadfast love...faithfulness*: These are attributes of Yahweh, the God of the covenant by whom

and which the people of Israel were created. They are also qualities which the people of Israel are to embody in their relationship with each other, and with the nations.

Romans 5:1-8

{1} "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, {2} through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. {3} And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, {4} and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, {5} and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. {6} For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. {7} Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. {8} But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us."

"Paul now proceeds from the question of salvation and justification to the consequences of faith in Christ Jesus. Whereas humanity left to itself without the gospel came only under the wrath of God, through the gospel and through the grace of God that it proclaims humanity now finds justification, redemption, expiation, and pardon of its sins."

1. since we are justified...we have peace with God: The effect of justification is to produce reconciliation. We were God's enemies, now we have been reconciled to him by the death of Christ, and we shall be saved by the life of Christ (Romans 5:10). "Peace" is to be understood "in the positive OT sense of *shalom*, the fullness of right relationship that is implied in justification itself and of all the other bounties that flow from it. See Isa 32:17, "The effect of uprightness...will be peace, and the result of uprightness, quiet and trust forever."

2. we have obtained access: Christ has "as it were, escorted them into the royal audience-chamber of God's presence."

we boast in our hope: In Romans 3:27 "boasting" in one's own righteousness is excluded. The boasting which Paul now acknowledges is pride in the hope of sharing the glory of God which is not deserved by promised.

3. we also boast in our sufferings: The sufferings we take pride in are those "that might tend to separate human beings from Christ's love.... The function of hope in Christian life is to motivate and develop conduct, endurance, and character."

suffering produces endurance: This is also not a matter of boasting. The endurance is also God's gift, which in turn leads through God-give character to God-given hope.

5. hope does not disappoint us: While hope based on human ability or aptitude often disappoints us, hope based on God cannot. "Once justified, the Christian is reconciled to God and experiences a peace that distressing troubles cannot upset, a hope that knows no disappointment, and a confidence that salvation is assured. For not only has God's uprightness has been manifested toward humanity, but now his love is poured into hearts through the holy Spirit that is given to human beings."

6. While we were still weak...ungodly: See verse 10: "while we were enemies." Our weakness is not to be thought of as a passive weakness or helplessness, but rather as ungodliness, the expression of our separation from God.

6-8: What is rare, though not unknown, God has done to prove his love for us (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10. "'A few may face death for a good man, still fewer for a righteous man, but in the case of Christ there is more even than this; He died for declared enemies of God' (Sandy and Headlam, *Romans*, 127."

Matthew 9:35-10:8 [9-23]

{35} "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. {36} When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. {37} Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; {38} therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."" {10:1} "Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. {2} These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; {3} Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; {4} Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one

who betrayed him. {5} These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, {6} but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. {7} As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' {8} Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. {9} Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, {10} no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. {11} Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. {12} As you enter the house, greet it. {13} If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. {14} If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. {15} Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. {16} "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. {17} Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; {18} and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. {19} When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; {20} for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. {21} Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; {22} and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. {23} When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."]

This passage continues the Gospel from last Sunday after the omission of 9:27-34 which reports the healing of a blind man and a mute demoniac, two more people who were unclean.

35-36: A transition to the second discourse in Matthew.

36. *sheep without a shepherd*: The prophets used similar images as an indictment, not of the sheep, but of those who should have been their protectors, the religious and civil leaders. The people are beset from every direction: the upper classes, those who resist the Romans, those whose patrons are the Romans, those who engage in "social banditry," tax collectors, Roman soldiers.

10:1. *cure every disease and every sickness*: The disciples are to do what Jesus has been doing (9:35). The curing of disease is a component of the restoration of the conditions of paradise before the fall. The one who has the power to cure is a representative of that time.

2-4: *the twelve apostles*: "apostle" only here in Matthew (twice in Mark, six times in Luke). An apostle is one who is sent with the authority and the will of another, a broker who represents the resources of his patron, in this case, Jesus. The order in which they are named reflects considerations of value. The first four are those who are prominent. Judas is last because he would be the betrayer.

3. *Matthew the tax collector*: Matthew is identified with the tax collector mentioned in 9:9 who replaced Levi in Mark 2:13-17. Tax collectors were social and religious undesirables. They served the Romans and used any means to fulfill their quotas without expense to themselves. Matthew would have been a "toll collector employed by those contracting directly with the Romans to collect fees on the movement of goods," so he was not a very high level tax collector.

5. *Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*: At this stage of Jesus' ministry the focus is on the people of Israel. When he was asked to relieve a demon-possessed Canaanite Jesus said that "was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). In 28:19 the focus is changed and the Eleven are sent out to make disciples of all nations.

7: The apostles' verbal message is that the kingdom of heaven is near. In addition they are to do the signs of the kingdom, namely, healing, raising the dead, cleansing lepers and casting out demons.

17. *their synagogue*: The pronoun suggests that Christian Jews have been excluded from certain synagogues. The difficulty is that the synagogue in question may then have had no authority to flog them. Paul also suffered and accepted the authority of the synagogue, and was punished by flogging (2 Corinthians 11:24). The word "synagogue" is used as a term for the gathering of Christian Jews (e.g. James 2:2).

19. *what you are to say will be given to you*: The apostles do not speak for themselves, but for God. What happens to them is a demonstration of the rejection of the Father.

21. *brother will betray brother*: "In the Mediterranean societies of antiquity, the family of origin is

owed paramount loyalty and total attachment. Kinship is the overriding social institution, holding precedence and primacy in the lives of all the persons Jesus dealt with. Persons placing loyalty to some surrogate family above attachment to family of origin, as the disciples of Jesus are asked to do in Matthew, will find that family of origin and the associated social network ("friends") turn against them. Social solidarity within the all-important networks and the honor of the family of origin would require that they do so," Jesus describes the disruption of family relationships caused by the change of loyalty in Matthew 10:34-39 and parallels in Luke 12:49-53 and Mark 13:12-13.

22. *the one who endures to the end will be saved*: They must remain steadfast and not give up. They will be saved even though they are persecuted for the sake of the message they have been given.

23. *you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes*: If this is intended to refer to the parousia, it clearly failed to occur within this time frame, unless it is taken to mean that the mission to Israel has never been fully accomplished. Perhaps we should see the coming of the Son of Man as a reference to the crucifixion and resurrection.

Reflection

Christ died for us, not when we were righteous, but while we were ungodly sinners, and because of him we have now been given hope through the gift of the Holy Spirit. As people of God we are endowed with the holiness and righteousness of God. We are a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to bring hope to the lost and sick and oppressed, who are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

This Sunday is Father's Day in the civil calendar.

Hymns

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
382 D--Awake, O Spirit
306 II--Chief of Sinners
215 II--O Lord, We

434 G--The Son of
381 G--Hark, the Voice
385, 379, 196, 814s

Prayers of the People

P or A: The death Christ died he died once for all, the life Christ lives he lives for all. Let us come before God asking for a share of Christ's life for all, saying, "by the power of God," and responding, "Let us walk in newness of life."

A: United with Christ in a death like his through our baptism, make your church a place where people come to be freed from sin. Help all the baptized confess our faith and live our freedom day by day, in word and action, by the power of God. Let us walk in newness of life.

A: Living as servants of Christ in this world, let us help those whom others have cast off. Where there are gaps in the social net, prepare people who will fill them in true care and creativity. Use us in your plan, by the power of God. Let us walk in newness of life.

A: For fathers and all men who serve as providers and role models for children. Give them grace to be faithful in you and their children. May we all support one another faithfully. By the power of God, Let us walk in newness of life.

A: For the elderly, the frail, the sad and the sick, especially we remember _____. May each receive renewed health and salvation, by the power of God. Let us walk in newness of life.

A: For the unemployed that useful work may be offered to them. For all who are engaged in honest labor, that it provide for the needs of those who depend on them and bring honor to you. By the power of God. Let us walk in newness of life.

P: Light of the world, before whom all is revealed, grant us the courage to lose ourselves for your sake that we may take up our cross and follow Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Or

Presider or deacon

As a priestly people, chosen by God as a holy nation, we offer prayers for the whole world and for

every person in every need.

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 all that is good and bountiful for the world, and for mercy, justice, and peace.

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

For ourselves, our families, and 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

God of mercy and justice, we offer into your hands the cares and concerns of all peoples, and we trust you to care for them in love, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Notes

[1] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, p. 393.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 395.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 396.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 397.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 394

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 399

[7] Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, pp. 81, 82-83.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

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

[10] http://www.worship.ca/text/int_a2.txt

[11] <http://members.home.com/oplater/prayer.htm>