

Proper 9



Prayer of the Day

God of glory and love, peace comes from you alone. Send us as peacemakers and witnesses to your kingdom, and fill our hearts with joy in your promises of salvation; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Isaiah 66:10-14

{10} Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her-- {11} that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom. {12} For thus says the LORD: I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees. {13} As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. {14} You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bodies shall flourish like the grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the LORD is with his servants, and his indignation is against his enemies.

10. rejoice...and be glad...all you who love her...all you who mourn over her: Those who are concerned about the fortunes of Jerusalem are summoned to rejoice.

11: The imagery is that of a hungry child satisfied by its mother's milk.

12-13. prosperity...like a river...wealth of the nations...like an overflowing stream: The metaphor of a river for salvation was used in Isaiah 48:18. Yahweh promises "the wealth of the nations" in 60:5 and 61:6.

you shall nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees: The metaphor of mother and child from verse 11 is repeated.

14. the hand of the Lord is with his servants and his indignation is against his enemies: The future of Jerusalem is guaranteed by Yahweh's promise to his people. Those who are his enemies will face his indignation.

Psalms 66:1-9

{1} Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; {2} sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise. {3} Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you. {4} All the earth worships you; they sing praises to you, sing praises to your name." Selah {5} Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds among mortals. {6} He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There we rejoiced in him, {7} who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations-- let the rebellious not exalt themselves. Selah {8} Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard, {9} who has kept us among the living, and has not let our feet slip.

1. Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth: See Psalm 98:4; 100:1 with "Lord" (Yahweh) for "God." Psalm 66 is an "Elohistic" Psalm. It uses the generic word *elohim* to designate God, rather than to designate God, rather than YHWH, the name of Israel's God. The whole earth is called on to praise God with a loud voice.

3. How awesome are your deeds.... ...your enemies cringe before you: See for example, Deuteronomy 4:34, which recounts the extraction of the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt, "by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched

arm, and by terrifying displays of power," surely enough to make the Egyptians cringe.

4, 7. *Selah*: The word appears 71 times in 39 psalms. It is a performance cue: a pause, repetition, or refrain; a rising pitch or volume; or a posture, such as bowing.

5-6: The specific "awesome deeds" that are mentioned are connected with the Exodus, the constitutive event in Israel's history. For Israel it was not ancient history, but a very present and powerful reality, celebrated in the Temple, and constantly acknowledged as the source of the nation's life.

9. *who has kept us among the living, and has not let our feet slip*: "By guiding the Israelites safely through the Sea of Reeds, God kept them from becoming denizens of the underworld." [1]

Galatians 6:[1-6] 7-16

{1} My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. {2} Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. {3} For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. {4} All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. {5} For all must carry their own loads. {6} Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.] {7} Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. {8} If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. {9} So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. {10} So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. {11} See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! {12} It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised--only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. {13} Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. {14} May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. {15} For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! {16} As for those who will follow this rule--peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

1-6: Paul provides some instruction on how to proceed in the case of wrong-doing by a member of the church. "In the present context the wrong-doer would certainly be a Christian, and his offense would fall into the kinds of things listed in 5:19-21." [2]

1. *you who have received the Spirit*: Galatians 6:25: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit."

restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness: "Restoration," not punishment or condemnation, is the goal of the community toward its errant member. In keeping with this goal, several maxims are offered to guide the community in its efforts.

Take care that you yourselves are not tempted: The temptation to self-righteousness toward the wrongdoer "can cause greater damage to the community than the offense done by a wrongdoer." [3]

2. *Bear one another's burdens*: "the maxim means that 'failure' by Christians should be regarded as part of the 'burden of life' and should be shared and borne by the Christian community." [4]

in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ: Galatians 5:14, "the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." By bearing another's burdens, especially when those burdens are wrongdoing and the consequences of this wrongdoing for the Christian community, one emulates the example of Christ who bore our sins and the consequences of them.

4. *All must test their own work*: Christians must critically examine the conduct of their lives, not in comparison with others, but in the light of Christ's admonition to "love your neighbor." A counter example in Jesus' teaching is that of the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14.

5. *All must carry their own loads*: "...everybody has his load to bear, and he had better learn to bear it.... There is no contradiction between this statement and that in 6:2, because "sharing the burdens of life" does not eliminate the fact that everybody must learn how to live with himself." [5]

6. *Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher*: As a Christian has been taught to share another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ, so that same Christian is under obligation to share his/her resources with the one who blessed him/her with such a great gift.

Although this part of the lesson is marked as optional, it is an important part of Paul's teaching and one that is rarely explored.

7. *God is not mocked*: A common proverb; God is not to be treated with contempt.

you reap whatever you sow: Everyone will be judged in accordance with what they have done. To mock God would be foolish in those circumstances.

9. *let us not grow weary in doing what is ripe, for we will reap*: Paul appeals to his audience to prepare to be judged by doing what is right.

10. *let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith*: "It is not intended to revoke the preceding high-flying universalism, but to direct the attention of the readers to the concrete historical reality of the Christian community." [6] The Christian community is tiny in comparison with the rest of humanity, and both must be attended to.

11. *See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand*: Paul begins writing in his own hand with verse 11 and continues to the end.

12-16: Paul's postscript summarizes the argument of the letter. There is nothing worth boasting of except the cross of Christ. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any value. What is needed is a new creation. Upon those who accept his teaching Paul pronounces a blessing of peace.

the Israel of God: That part of Jewish Christianity which accepted and approved the decisions of the Jerusalem Council regarding Gentile Christians. "Clearly excluded and under the curse are the 'false brothers' back then (cf. 2:4-5) and now (cf. 1:6-9)." [7]

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

{1} After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. {2} He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. {3} Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. {4} Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. {5} Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' {6} And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. {7} Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. {8} Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; {9} cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' {10} But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, {11} 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near'.... {16} "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me." {17} The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" {18} He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. {19} See, I have given you

authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. {20} Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

1. *the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs*: Jesus had more disciples than just the twelve, who may have remained with Jesus during this mission.

2. *the Lord of the harvest*: God is the Lord of the harvest; under his patronage the harvest will take place.

3. *lamb into the midst of wolves*: The metaphor portrays both the relative strength of the disciples and their enemies, as well as the fierceness of their enemies.

4. *no sandals*: Sandals are forbidden in Luke 9:3 also. In Mark 6:9 Jesus explicitly tells the disciples to wear sandals. (Matthew 10:10 agrees with Luke.)

greet no one on the road: See 2 Kings 4:29. The order not to greet anyone seems to imply that the mission is so urgent that no effort should be diverted from the task at hand.

5-6. *say, 'Peace.... your peace will rest...it will return*: It is as if "peace" has a physical quality. Here the operation of "peace" seems automatic; in Matthew the disciples are admonished to offer their peace only if the recipient house is "worthy" (Matthew 10:13).

10. *whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you*: This has already happened to Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:52-53). Jesus did not allow his disciples to punish the Samaritans. Here he authorizes them to make a demonstration against those who do not welcome them.

16. *Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me...and the one who sent me*: In Matthew 25:31-46 the principle that how we treat those in need is how we treat Jesus is developed. Here the principle is similar, but it has to do with listening to the testimony of the seventy.

17. *I watched Satan fall from heaven*: Satan is a member of the heavenly Court (Job 1:6 ff), whose task is to denounce those who have sinned against Yahweh (Zechariah 3:1). Because the all spirits are submissive to Jesus' disciples Satan's office is no longer needed, and he is expelled from the heavenly Court.

19. *I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions...and nothing will hurt you*: Some of the same ideas are presented in Mark's long ending (Mark 16:9ff).

Reflection

The message of the passage of Isaiah is that those who have returned from exile will now live in the certainty of Yahweh's promise of love and protection, of prosperity and joy, of salvation and delight. Those who know the despair of separation from God can return to live in the promise of God's love and forgiveness because of Christ.

In the words of the Psalm we rejoice in the awesome deeds of God who keeps us among the living and has not let our foot slip.

Showing love to our neighbor includes correcting him/her when (s)he sins, and accepting him/her when (s)he repents. We are not to be concerned with what serves or pleases us, but rather what is good for all.

In the Gospel Jesus instructs his followers in missionary technique. He has given his followers authority over all spirits, but we are not to rejoice in our power over the spirits, but that our names are written in heaven.

Hymns [8]

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

563 --E--For the Fruit	777v --II--In the Morning
381 --D--Hark, the Voice	382 --G--Awake, O Spirit
402 --II--Look From Your	421, 825s/737v, 234, 815s
395 --II--I Trust, O	

Prayers of the People [9]

Presider or deacon

Called to proclaim the kingdom of God, let us offer prayers for all those in every need.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy people of God in every place.

For mercy, peace, and justice in the world, and for our nation on its birthday.

For all those on vacation.

For the sick and the suffering, the poor and the oppressed, prisoners and their families.

For the dying and the dead.

For ourselves, our families and 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

Lord of the harvest, hear the prayers we offer today and guard us as we labor in your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

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[1] Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II 51-100: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., p. 1968, p. 121.

[2] Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979, p.296.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 298.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 304.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 311.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 323.

[8] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rc1c0001.txt>

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