

Proper 7



Prayer of the Day

O God our defender, storms rage about us and cause us to be afraid. Rescue your people from despair, deliver your sons and daughters from fear, and preserve us all from unbelief; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Isaiah 65:1-9

{1} I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask, to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, "Here I am, here I am," to a nation that did not call on my name. {2} I held out my hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices; {3} a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and offering incense on bricks; {4} who sit inside tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat swine's flesh, with broth of abominable things in their vessels; {5} who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you." These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all day long. {6} See, it is written before me: I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will indeed repay into their laps {7} their iniquities and their ancestors' iniquities together, says the LORD; because they offered incense on the mountains and reviled me on the hills, I will measure into their laps full payment for their actions. {8} Thus says the LORD: As the wine is found in the cluster, and they say, "Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it," so I will do for my servants' sake, and not destroy them all. {9} I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah inheritors of my mountains; my chosen shall inherit it, and my servants shall settle there.

1-8: "Yahweh is the speaker, and he contrasts his own availability to the failure of Israel to 'seek' him. Indeed, it is rather Yahweh who has sought Israel and has not found it. The interest of the poem is entirely cultic; Israel has not sought Yahweh because it has substituted superstitious cults for the rites of Yahweh." [1]

1. *sought...found*: See Isaiah 55:6 where Yahweh invites the people to seek him and call on him.

I said, "Here I am, here I am": This is the same response given by Samuel when Yahweh called him (1 Samuel 3:4), by Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8), as well as by others, Abraham (Genesis 22:1); Esau (Genesis 27:1); Jacob (Genesis 31:11), etc. It is the customary response to a query, "Who?" Yahweh begs for recognition, and the people did not seek him.

5. *I am too holy for you*: This is the claim of the spiritually arrogant, a claim made in this case by those who have exchanged the torah of Yahweh for the worship of other gods.

8: "Verse 8 furnishes the key to the poem. From v. 8 onwards—and v 8 also substantiates what follows—the prophetic announcement divides into an announcement of salvation and an announcement of doom, the one applying to the devout in the nation and the other to the transgressors. The section preceding, vv. 1-7, is purely an announcement of doom." [2]

"As the wine is found in the cluster, and they say, "Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it": This is probably a popular proverb. Israel is compared with a cluster with both good, sweet, juicy grapes and puny, dry, sour ones. "This proverb-like turn of

phrase retains the oldest meaning of *b^eraka*, blessing=power of giving increase. Since all such power is God-given, it would be transgression to destroy it. In just the same way, the nation in which the transgressions described in vv. 3b-5 are committed nevertheless still contains a remnant for whose sake God forbears to destroy the entire nation." [3] "The analogy is similar to the parables of the weeds (Matt xiii 24-30) and the dragnet (Matt xiii 47-40)." [4]

9: The remnant will inherit the land of Israel from the valley of Sharon on the west to the valley of Achor near the Jordan River on the east (verse 10); there they will live in peace.

Psalm 22:19-28

{19} But you, O LORD, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid! {20} Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! {21} Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me. {22} I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: {23} You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! {24} For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him. {25} From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him. {26} The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever! {27} All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. {28} For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

The Psalm begins, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." Verses 1-21 recite the distress of the psalmist who feels abandoned by Yahweh. In verse 21 an oracle answering the singer's cry for help is announced, "From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me." A song of thanksgiving and praise begins with verse 22.

23. *All you offspring of Jacob...of Israel*: Jacob is the grandson of Abraham; his offspring are descendants of Abraham. Israel is the name God gave Jacob at the ford of the Jabbok river (Genesis 32:28). Abraham's descendants are called on to praise Yahweh for his intervention.

25. *you*: Yahweh is the source and even the content of the singer's praise.

my vows: This is not a *quid pro quo* for Yahweh's favor, but an expression of the singer's desire to praise God for his deliverance.

26: "We should probably assume that the song of praise and thanksgiving of vv. 22-31 was intoned at a meal for the poor in connection with an offering.... The [*nwym*, "poor"], among whom the petitioner of our psalm counts himself (v. 24a), are to eat and be satisfied. But this wish, according to v. 26b, has an ultimate meaning: the poor may experience the full life of nearness to God for all times!" [5] Not only does Yahweh care for Israel, Yahweh also rules the nations, and they worship him. It is here that the connection with the first lesson is made.

27-31. *the ends of the earth...all the families of the nations...*: Not only those of the chosen people, but all people shall worship the creator and ruler of the world. Cf. 1 Kings 8:41-43: Solomon prays that Yahweh will hear the prayer of a foreigner who is not of the people of Israel, when (s)he prays toward the Temple.

all who sleep in the earth: This goes beyond the thought in Psalms 6:5; 30:9-10; 88:10-12, that the dead do not praise Yahweh. The boundary between world and beyond has been broken down, and even the dead now praise God.

30. *posterity...future generations...a people yet unborn*: The singer's descendants will

serve Yahweh and keep alive his rescue by telling of it to coming generations. So, both the dead and the not yet born are witnesses to the power and protection of Yahweh.

Galatians 3:23-29

{23} Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. {24} Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. {25} But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, {26} for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. {27} As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. {28} There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. {29} And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

23-29: The pericope is an answer to the question posed in verses 19, "What the is the Law?" and 21, "Is the Law then opposed to the promises of God?" What about Gentiles? Were they free from the law even before faith came, or were we in bondage too? See, for example Romans 1:18-3:20. But we must be careful not to read Romans into Galatians.

23. *before faith came*: All history is divided into the time before faith came and after. "...faith was not generally available to mankind before Christ's coming, but was a matter for the future. During this time the Jews [we] were kept imprisoned 'under the Torah' [*hupo nomon*]." [6]

24. *the law was our disciplinarian*: "...the slave who accompanied the school boy to the school and back, and carried his books and writing utensils. The task of the slave was to protect the child against molesters and accidents, and also to make sure he learned good manners.... The figure of the pedagogue is looked upon as a hard but necessary instrument in bringing a person to achieve and realize virtue.... Paul's concept presupposes not only the radical devaluation of the Law, but also a grim concept of *paideia*] ('education') in addition to the rather ugly type of the pedagogue." [7]

until Christ came: Not that Christ's coming "would imply the idea of a positive educational development from Judaism to Christianity.... The Torah represents the negative backdrop, without which the positive divine redemption would never have come." [8]

26-29: "Parallels in other literature suggest that we have before us a form of a saying, made up of a number of components, which must have had its place and function in early Christian baptismal liturgy." [9]

children of God through faith: All are children of God, not by election or obedience, but by the Spirit's gift of faith in Christ

28. *Jew or Greek...slave or free...male and female*: In the parallels in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Colossians 3:11, the "male and female" component does not appear; and its form is different from the others pairs, so it was possibly added by Paul. The "three parallel statements...define the religious, cultural, and social consequences of the Christian baptismal initiation...they...name the old status of the baptized and declare this old status abolished.... a new status is claimed." [10] This is revolutionary language for it dismisses the very foundations of society, religious, social and cultural distinctions, and declaring them null and void, asserts the reality of a new structure based on unity "in Christ" and nothing else.

29. *you are Abraham's seed*: The fulfillment of the promise to Abraham's seed, that is, Christ (Galatians 3:16), is now unfolded in those who believe in Christ.

Luke 8:26-39

{26} Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. {27} As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. {28} When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"-- {29} for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) {30} Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. {31} They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss. {32} Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. {33} Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. {34} When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. {35} Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. {36} Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. {37} Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. {38} The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, {39} "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

26. *they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes*: Jesus and his disciples had crossed the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus had stilled a storm that threatened to swamp the boat. Though the name of the place is also given as "Gadara," and "Gergasa," this makes no difference in understanding the reading.

a man of the city who had demons: He wore not clothes and did not live in a house (verse 27); the name of the demons was "Legion" (verse 30), and they drove him into the wilderness, so it was necessary to keep him under guard (verse 29).

28. *he fell down before him*: "...the demon assumes a posture of abject deference, so out of character with the approach proposed by the devil at 4:7." [11]

29. *Jesus, Son of the Most High God...do not torment me*: The title used by the demoniac echoes one given to Jesus in the infancy narrative, "He will...be hailed as Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:32). Fitzmyer divides the sentences differently and translates the tense differently: "Jesus was about to charge the unclean spirit to come out of the man." [12]

for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man: Note the singular noun, "spirit."

30. *Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?"*: In popular belief knowing the demon's name gave power over the demon. Jesus demonstrates that he does not need a name to control the demon(s).

Legion: "Legion" is not a name, but a number. "A Roman *legio* numbered six thousand soldiers." [13]

31. *They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss*: "The Greek word *abyssos* can denote either the abode of the dead...or the final prison of Satan and the demons (Rev 20:3)." [14]

32. *a large herd of swine*: Mark 5:13 says 2000. Pigs were considered unclean according to Old Testament food laws (Leviticus 11:7; Deuteronomy 14:8).

33: The demons enter the pigs and the pigs are drowned. Nothing is said about what happened to the demons then, but the implication is left that they can no longer afflict

human beings.

35-37: The people found the demoniac sitting at Jesus' feet (like a disciple). They were frightened and asked Jesus to leave their country. The man begged to be allowed to accompany Jesus, but was left as a witness to God's power and authority (verse 39).

Reflection

If the second lesson is chosen as the basis for the homily then great care will be necessary to explore Paul's changing view of the relationship between faith and the law from Galatians to Romans without reading Galatians as if it were Romans. This is not an easy task but a rewarding one, for it avoids the pitfall of anti-Semitism that plagues Christianity, at the same time remaining true to Paul's vision of the unity created by Christ.

If the Gospel and the other texts are chosen then the first lesson reflects Yahweh's impatience with those who will not seek him and will not even let him find them. The Gospel, too, deals with the refusal of those to whom Jesus offers freedom to accept it. The cured demoniac is left as a witness to the power that was present among the Gerasenes and was refused. This is our task, too. To proclaim how much Jesus has done for us, even among those who would rather not hear.

Somehow, sometime, "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations." And he will accomplish this through grace, not through the force of the law, otherwise Christ's coming will have been in vain.

Hymns [\[16\]](#)

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

552 --E--In Thee Is	--II--759s/693s, 697v, 694v
484 --D--God, My Lord, My	506 --G--Dear Lord and
801s --I--He Comes to	192, 228/9, 431, 429
(768v)	
--P--452, 777v, 714v	

Prayers of the People [\[17\]](#)

P or A: Living together in Christ and longing to know the Spirit's working in our midst, we pray, "Send us your Spirit, Lord" and respond, "Come, Holy Spirit."

A: For the variety of races and backgrounds that make up the human family, that we may live together in harmony and justice. Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: As you gave courage to the prophet Elijah to live as a man of God, so give us the courage to proclaim your gospel in a cruel and frightening world. Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For those who are lonely and feel forsaken by you, that they might learn of your faithful presence. Encourage us who recognize their loneliness to extend hands of friendship. Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For the sick and the suffering and for those who keep watch over them. We think

especially of _____. Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: Cast out those things in us which separate us from you and from one another--greed, jealousy, hate. Restore our broken selves that we may be made whole. Send your Spirit, Lord. Come...

P: To your open hands we commend our prayers. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Or [18]

Presider or deacon

Baptized into Christ and clothed with salvation, let us offer prayers with deep compassion.

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 mercy, justice, and peace throughout the world.

For this city and every place.

For those on vacation.

For all those in every danger and calamity: those afflicted and suffering hardship, those beaten and imprisoned, those sleepless and hungry.

For the dying and the dead, and all who mourn.

For ourselves, our families and companions, and 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

God of everlasting mercy, hear the prayers we offer this day for all who suffer and are rejected, and open our hearts to see your face in all your human creatures, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

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[1] John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, New York, 1968, p. 195.

[2] Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969, p. 399.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 404.

[4] McKenzie, *Ibid.*, p. 198.

[5] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988, pp. 299f.

[6] Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979, p.176.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[11] Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel*.

Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, p. 182.

[12] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*: Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., p. 732, also p. 738.

[13] *Loc. cit.*

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 739.

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

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

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



If you have a pocket computer (Palm, Handspring, Sony, Windows CE or Web Enabled phone) try this [optional way](#) of accessing the current week's text study and downloading it to your PDA.