

HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT IS SAYING

In Scripture and Prayer and The Great Cloud of Witnesses

Week of July 10, 2022

Collect for Proper 10

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. BCP 231

Introductions to the Lectionary Readings

Beginning this week I will provide an introduction to the lesson. Crafted for use in worship they are also an excellent aid to reading for personal study. The source of the introductions: Frederick Borsch and George Woodward, *Introducing the Lessons of the Church Year, Third Edition* (New York; Harrisburg, PA; Denver: Morehouse Publishing, 2009). Available on Kindle.

Deuteronomy 30:9-14 NRSVue, 2021

This Hebrew Bible reading offers a promise of prosperity to the people who obey God's commandments. His counsel is presented as the teaching of Moses. It was probably written at a later time when the law was not well observed. Yet the Lord's word is not distant or hard to understand. God has not left the divine will in doubt. It is near to hand in the commandments God has given.

⁹ [Moses said to the people of Israel] The Lord your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, ¹⁰ if you obey the Lord your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

¹¹ Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. ¹² It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹⁴ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

Colossians 1:1-14 NRSVue, 2021

In this lesson Paul greets the Christians at Colossae, offers thanks for their faith, and prays for their further strengthening. Paul had apparently not visited this city in the country today known as Turkey, but he praises his fellow servant Epaphras, who brought the gospel to the new converts. The apostle asks that they may be filled with spiritual understanding and be fruitful in good works. So will they give thanks to the God who has rescued them from the power of darkness and evil and brought them into the kingdom of the Son of God.

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and
Timothy our brother,

² To God's holy people in Colossae,
the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ:
Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— ⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world— just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. ⁷ You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸ and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you[f] to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 10:25-37 NRSVue, 2021

The gospel is the lawyer's question and the parable of the Good Samaritan. While testing Jesus, this expert in the law asks a question at the heart of human longing: how can life's true meaning and purpose be realized? Jesus causes him to answer for himself with the summary of the law. Recognizing how hard it is to put such lofty commandments into practice, the lawyer next asks, who is the neighbor that I am to

love? Jesus hears his real question (who is not my neighbor?) and tells him the story of a man who could help another without requiring the law's definition.

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷ He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Psalm 25:1-9 BCP 614

A prayer for forgiveness and guidance and an expression of trust in the Lord.

- 1 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my trust in you; *
let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph over me.
- 2 Let none who look to you be put to shame; *
let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.
- 3 Show me your ways, O Lord, * and teach me your paths.
- 4 Lead me in your truth and teach me, *
for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all the day long.

4

5 Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love, *
for they are from everlasting.

6 Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; *
remember me according to your love and
for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.

7 Gracious and upright is the Lord; *
therefore he teaches sinners in his way.

8 He guides the humble in doing right *
and teaches his way to the lowly.

9 All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness *
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Supplemental Resources

Brief introduction to the Letter to the Colossians

Colossae was a city in what is now southwestern Turkey. It had a flourishing wool and textile industry and a significant Jewish population. It seems that most Christians there were Gentile. Although long thought to be written by Paul, today this epistle is considered non-Pauline for a number of reasons. The most compelling is that it emphasizes what God has already done for his people: Paul tells us what God is going to do in the future (although some argue that Paul shifted his viewpoint in later life.) It gives descriptions of false teachings which were being promulgated in the churches. Some scholars consider this evidence of later authorship. In the ancient world, writing in the name of a respected author was accepted and regarded as an honour.

[Comments. Revised Common Lectionary Commentary](#) by Chris Haslam and supervised by the Venerable Alan T. Perry, Anglican Diocese of Montreal (Anglican Church of Canada). Accessed July 8, 2022

Revised Common Lectionary Commentary

URL: <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/index.shtml>

Stan Hirsch introduced me to this website before the turn of the century. I still frequently use the material, and I commend the site to you. The link (above) will take you to the Home Page that introduces you to the features of the site.

I mostly use the links to the readings “For this week, next week, and last week;” each Sunday has the following choices:

- **Comments**, short commentaries on the readings,

- **Introductions** to the lections intended for use by the reader in worship, and
- **Clippings** presents technical notes, as well as some material that might be of interest, but was omitted due to space limitations.

More features are listed on the Home Page, including [Book Outlines](#) that provides a brief introduction to the Books of the Bible used in our worship. The brief introduction to Colossians (above) came from the Book Outlines page on this website.

From Colossians, hear what the Spirit is saying about prayer

Verse references to the letter are from Chapter 1 unless otherwise noted.

Paul addresses his letter to “the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae” v.2

... “saints” always translates the Greek term for “holy ones” (*hagioi*) and where it refers to those whose relationship with God is maintained through faith in Jesus Christ ... In Acts and the Pauline Letters, the term most often refers to Christians who live in particular places, such as Jerusalem.

“Saints,” in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary (Revised and Updated)*, ed. Mark Allan Powell (New York: HarperCollins, 2011),

1. In your own prayers (now or ever) have you ever considered yourself a saint, a member of God’s holy people being addressed by Paul, “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God”?
2. How does this opening change if you hear it addressed to “the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in the Coachella Valley”?
3. What indications do you have that, in fact, you are a saint? Does it make a difference to know this (intellectually) and/or feel this (heartfelt conviction that you belong)? Are feelings able to be trusted? How important is it to feel the truth of Paul’s address?

Paul’s greeting continues, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father.”

1. I frequently use the greeting “Grace and peace to you” in writing (not so much in speech/conversation). Do you use this greeting? Do you have a favorite “biblical” greeting you can share? What are the dimensions of grace, of peace, with which we greet another?
2. This is a blessing (in my mind). (May) Grace bless you; (May) Peace be a blessing to you. Comments?

Paul confesses, “In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints (vv. 3-4)

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1. How often do you thank God for those at the heart of your prayer? What difference does it make? How often do you pray? How often do you pray for others?
2. Paul's thanksgiving is inspired by what he hears of the Colossians' faith in Christ Jesus and the love they have for all the saints (God's people). Who (past, present or still to come) inspires your prayers? What, in all of God's creation, inspires your prayers?
3. In your estimation who are "the saints" that draw out your love?
4. How is that love expressed? In what ways has the boundaries of your love (or the love of the community to which you belong) expanded over time?

Epaphras has told Paul about the Colossians and their "love in the Spirit." vv. 7-8. In verses 9-14 he writes,

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. ¹¹ May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, so that you may have all endurance and patience, joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul tells us that he has not stopped praying for the Colossians, and that he continually asks God to gift them with knowledge of God's will, spiritual wisdom and understanding for a purpose.

5. Do you trust (believe) that in the communion of saints Paul is asking the same for you (v.9)?
6. Have you tried to pray always? What have you experienced while praying always? Do you have some wisdom to share about praying always, no stopping, continually being in prayer?
7. After asking God to bless the Colossians Paul continues "so that..." Comment on the "so that" content of Paul's prayer for the Colossians (vv. 10-14). Have you ever asked these things for others? For yourself? Have you given thanks as you have witnessed answers to your prayers? Do others pray like this for you? What difference would such prayer content make in our world? In those closest to you? In you?

Spiritual Day Hike

In the landscape where Spirit & World intersect



Week of July 10, 2022

This Week's Holy Women and Men (Witnesses to inspire us)

Commemorations in the Episcopal Church are listed in the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), in Lesser Feasts and Fasts (LFF), and in a Great Cloud of Witnesses (GCoW).

Here are the Holy Women and Men remembered this week:

Jul 11.....[Benedict of Nursia](#), Monastic, c 550 CE *LFF*

Jul 12.....[Nathan Söderblom](#), Archbishop of Uppsala and Ecumenist, 1931 *GCoW*

Jul 13.....[Conrad Weiser](#) Witness to Peace and Reconciliation, 1760 *GCoW*

Jul 14.....[Argula von Grumbach](#), Scholar and Church Reformer, c. 1554 *LFF*

Jul 14.....[Samson Occom](#), Witness to the Faith in New England, 1792 *GCoW*

Jul 16.....["The Righteous Gentiles"](#) *GCoW*

July 11: Benedict of Nursia, Monastic, c.550 CE

Benedict is generally considered the father of Western monasticism. He was born around 480, at Nursia in central Italy, and was educated at Rome. Rome at this time was overrun by various barbarian tribes and the period was one of considerable political and social instability. Benedict's disapproval of the manners and morals of Rome led him to a vocation of ascetic seclusion. He withdrew to a hillside cave above Lake Subiaco, about forty miles west of Rome, where there was already at least one other hermit.

Gradually, after many setbacks and considerable opposition, a community grew up around Benedict. Sometime between 525 and 530, he moved south with some of his disciples to Monte Cassino, midway between Rome and Naples, where he established another community, and, about 540, composed his famous monastic rule. He died sometime between 540 and 550 and was buried in the same grave as his sister, Scholastica.

No personality or text in the history of monasticism, it has been said, has occasioned more studies than Benedict and his rule. The major problem for historians is the question of how much of the rule is original. This is closely related to the question of the date of another, very similar but anonymous, rule for monks, known as The Rule of the Master, which may antedate Benedict's Rule by ten years. This does not detract from the fact that Benedict's firm but reasonable rule has been the basic source document from which most subsequent Western monastic rules were derived. Its average day provides for a little over four hours to be spent in liturgical prayer, a little over five hours in spiritual reading, about six hours of work, one hour for eating, and about eight hours of sleep. The entire Psalter is to be recited in the Divine Office once every week. At profession, the new monk or nun takes vows of "stability, amendment of life, and obedience."

Day Hike -2

The prologue to the Rule says: “And so we are going to establish a school for the service of the Lord. In founding it we hope to introduce nothing harsh or burdensome. But if a certain strictness results from the dictates of equity for the amendment of vices or the preservation of charity, do not be at once dismayed and fly from the way of salvation, whose entrance cannot but be narrow (Matt. 7:14). For as we advance in the religious life and in faith, our hearts expand and we run the way of God’s commandments with unspeakable sweetness of love. Thus, never departing from His school, but persevering in the monastery according to His teaching until death, we may by patience share in the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:13) and deserve to have a share also in His kingdom.”

Gregory the Great wrote Benedict’s Life in the second book of his Dialogues. He also adopted Benedictine monasticism as an instrument of evangelization when, in 596, he sent Augustine and his companions to convert the Anglo-Saxon people. In the Anglican Communion today, the rules of many religious orders are strongly influenced by the Benedictine rule.

Lesser Feasts and Fasts, 2018

July 14 Argula von Grumbach, Scholar and Church Reformer, c. 1554

Argula von Grumbach would have been a remarkable woman in any age, but her brilliance shines especially brightly in her setting—Germany in the sixteenth century. She became the first published Protestant woman writer, and participated publicly in the theological and political debates of her time.

Argula was born in 1492 into a noble family in the Bavarian countryside. When she was ten, her father presented her with an illustrated copy of the German Bible—a lavish gift which seems to have made an impression on the young Argula. Her education continued when she was lady-in-waiting at the court, in a time when renaissance and reform were stirring the air in Munich and Germany.

Her parents died when she was 17; she married at 18 and moved to another country town, where she managed the household, finances, and land; bore, raised, and oversaw the education of four children; and pursued her interests in theology.

Argula’s life changed when, in September of 1523, she learned that the theologians at the nearby University of Ingolstadt had forced a young Lutheran tutor to recant his beliefs in public. He was saved from burning at the stake, but was to be exiled and imprisoned. Argula wrote a letter to these clerics, accusing them of “foolish violence against the word of God,” and notes that “nowhere in the Bible do I find that Christ, or his apostles, or his prophets put people in prison, burnt or murdered them, or sent them into exile.” She defends the writings of “Martin and Melancthon,” which she has read, and decries the University’s failed attempts to hide the truth of these reformers and of Scripture.

Despite her being a lay person and a woman, she says she is compelled to speak by her divine duty as a Christian to confess God's name (she quotes Matthew 10) and to be unashamed of Christ (Luke 9). Her knowledge of Scripture and artful use of it was striking to her readers of the time, and is striking now. Her letter is a variegated composition with textures from across the Bible, picking up Gospels, Psalms, and prophets to form the skeleton and teeth of her impassioned arguments.

She closes by saying, "What I have written to you is no woman's chit-chat, but the word of God; and (I write) as a member of the Christian Church, against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail." Her letter was immediately printed as a pamphlet, which was then reprinted in fourteen editions over two months. More pamphlets, letters, and poems followed, and consequences followed too. However, she did not seem ever to regret that she—like her beloved forebears Judith, Esther, and Jael—had been called by God into decisive action.

Lesser Feasts and Fasts, 2018

July 14: Samson Occom Witness to the Faith in New England, 1792

Samson Occom, one of the first ordained Native American ministers, was born a member of the Mohegan Nation near New London, Connecticut, in 1723. By the age of sixteen, Occom had been exposed to the evangelical preaching of the Great Awakening. In 1743, he began studying theology at the school of congregational minister Eleazar Wheelock, later founder of Dartmouth College.

Occom did mission work among the Native Americans in New England and Montauk, Long Island. In 1759, he was ordained a Presbyterian minister. In 1766, at the behest of Eleazar Wheelock, Occom went to England, where he was to raise money for Wheelock's Indian charity school. He preached extensively for over a year, traveling across England and raising over eleven thousand pounds from wealthy patrons, including King George III. When he returned from England, however, his family, supposedly under the care of Wheelock, was found destitute, and the school for which he had labored moved to Hanover, New Hampshire, where it became Dartmouth College. The funds he had raised had been put toward the education of Englishmen rather than of Native Americans.

Following a disagreement with the colonial government of Connecticut over a lack of compensation for lands they had sold, Occom and many other Mohegans moved to the Oneida territory in upstate New York. There, he and his companions founded the Brothertown Community. In his day, Occom was renowned for his eloquence and spiritual wisdom. He was the first Native American to publish his works in English. His work among the Mohegans of Connecticut, many of whom became Christians under his guidance, helped them to avoid later relocation.

Occom died in New Stockbridge, New York, in 1792.

A Great Cloud of Witnesses, 2018

Day Hike –4

July 16: “The Righteous Gentiles”

During the Second World War, thousands of Christians and persons of faith made valiant sacrifices, often at the risk of their own lives, to save Jews from the Holocaust. These “Righteous Gentiles” are honored for courageous action in the face of Hitler’s reign of terror. Raoul Wallenberg, a Lutheran, was a Swedish humanitarian and diplomat whose great resourcefulness saved thousands of Hungarian Jews during the Nazi occupation. He issued them Swedish passports so that they could escape, and housed many in Swedish government property in Budapest, thereby protecting them on the basis of diplomatic immunity. Hiram Bingham IV, an Episcopalian, was an American diplomat in France during the early years of the Nazi occupation. He violated State Department protocol by arranging escape routes for persecuted Jews, and often provided the most wanted with safe haven in his own home. When transferred to Argentina, he devoted considerable effort to tracking the movements of Nazi war criminals. Carl Lutz, an evangelical, was a Swiss diplomat in Budapest who also worked to save the lives of many Hungarian Jews. Although deeply involved in this endeavor at every level, he is most remembered for negotiating with the Nazis for safe passage from Hungary to Palestine for more than 10,000 Jews. Chiune Sugihara, an Orthodox Christian, while serving as Japanese Consul in Lithuania, rescued thousands of Jews by providing them with travel credentials so they could escape. In doing so, he violated official diplomatic policy and was removed from his country’s foreign service. He lived the rest of his life in disgrace. André and Magda Trocmé, of the Reformed tradition, were French Christians who saved the lives of several thousand Jews in France during the Nazi occupation. He was the pastor in Le Chambon-sur- Lignon and, together with people in neighboring communities, he created a safe haven for many refugees from the Nazi terror.

These faithful servants, together with more than 23,000 others verified to date, are honored at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial overlooking Jerusalem, and celebrated there as “the righteous among the nations.”

A Great Cloud of Witnesses, 2018

Collect for the Commemoration

Lord of the Exodus, who delivers your people with a strong hand and a mighty arm: Strengthen your Church with the examples of the Righteous Gentiles of World War II to defy oppression for the rescue of the innocent; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.