

October 26th, Proper 30

Opening Collect

Gracious and loving God,
the strength of those
who trust in you,
even in the midst of hardships.
Pour out your Spirit
on young and old alike,
that our dreams and visions
might be of your kingdom.
Give to those whom you have called
the faith that leads them to reject self-glorification
and instead to glory in your mercy.
We ask this through the One
who calls us from the dangers of pride,
and who is himself true humility,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit is one God,
now and for ever.

Joel 2:23-32: *Previous to this reading, there had been a plague of disastrous proportions. This was seen as a sign of the end times, for which we all must prepare. For now, God is forgiving -- God allows the land to be fertile again. Another sign of the end times is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on all flesh, and the prophesying of both men and women. Even in the end times, everyone who call on the Name of the Lord will be saved. As Christians, we see many of these signs "accomplished" through the work of Christ.*

Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.
And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.
And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.
And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.
And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your

God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.
And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh;
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream
dreams, your young men shall see visions:
And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out
my spirit.
And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and
pillars of smoke.
The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great
and terrible day of the Lord come.
And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall
be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as
the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18: *We pick up right where we left off last week with Paul's encouraging words to Timothy. Paul's death is imminent, his offering of himself, which he hopes will lead others to faith. (In fact, the witness of countless Christians willing to die for their faith is what eventually led to Christianity spreading) Paul knew that even in his death the Lord would save him and lead him to His heavenly kingdom. As Paul wrote, "To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen" Indeed!*

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.
I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:
Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the
righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them
also that love his appearing.
At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that
it may not be laid to their charge.
Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the
preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was
delivered out of the mouth of the lion.
And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his
heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Luke 18:9-14: *Addressing his disciples, Jesus told a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector in the Temple. Pharisees were considered to be righteous, Law abiding and faithful. Tax Collectors worked for an occupying government and to earn their pay, they charged an amount over and above the already high Roman*

tax on their own people. They were hated and not even able to join God's people in worship. In the parable the Pharisee thanks God he is not a tax collector, while the tax collector "standing far off" both physically and metaphorically, admits his sin before God. Jesus said the hated tax collector was justified rather than the Pharisee, for the humble before God will be exalted.

Jesus spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

These two men, the Pharisee and the tax collector, went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee, standing off by himself, prayed according to the Law. First, he justifies himself on the back of his fellow man: "God, I think you that I am not like other men – extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even that tax collector over there." Then, he justifies himself on the basis of his own works: "I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." And he was certain God agreed with him.

The tax collector also stood alone, far far away. He couldn't even lift his eyes, much less his face to heaven. Instead, he looked at the ground, and beat his breast, and said nothing more than "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" The Pharisee asked for nothing from God because he didn't think he needed anything from God; the publican asked for nothing but mercy. The Pharisee came with the record of his good works, and the record was long and impressive. The tax collector came with nothing. The Pharisee offered a tenth of everything he had; the tax collector offered his sinful, broken life.

Did you hear the shocking words of Jesus in the gospel reading? "I tell you, this man, the one who could not lift his eyes to heaven, the one who prayed for mercy, the tax collector, this man went down to his house justified." Declared righteous. Not the religious Pharisee, but the sinful tax collector! He went home justified by God. By grace, God's undeserved kindness. Through faith, trust in the promise that

God justifies the ungodly solely on the basis of His promise of mercy delivered for Christ's sake. The publican worshipped God in the way of the Gospel, through faith in God's promise, and God justified him.

If you exalt yourself with the Law, you will be humbled. You will be revealed to be a sinner, the chief of sinners. No matter how religious you may be, the Law will always accuse you, always humble you, always shut your mouth, amplify your sin, and ultimately kill you. That's what the Law does to sinners.

If you attempt to worship God according to the Law, to earn His favor with your commandment keeping, your piety, your good works, your religion, you will not be justified but condemned. Even if you worship the true God, it doesn't matter, because to worship God in the way of the Law is to treat God like an idol. Not a good idea, I assure you.

Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Concluding Prayers:

Let us pray for the Church, especially for our Parish, that God will continue to pour out the Spirit upon us all, that we faithfully trust in God's promise and live in confident obedience, rather than self exaltation.

Let us pray for Charles, our king, and all in authority that we be open in reaching out to all the people of the world, that as the Lord stands by us, giving us strength, we might stand by those in need in our world,

Let us pray for ourselves, that in humility we glory only in God's forgiving, generous love.

Let us pray for one another, that we persevere and daily seek out all who are hurt and cry and are in need.

Let us pray for our ordained and lay ministers, that together we comfort all those in any need; for food for the hungry and health for the sick, that touched by God they might know God in their midst and know that they are God's own people. Blessed are all those who have fought the good fight, called upon the name of the Lord, and know God's salvation. That we may keep them always in our sight, eager for the day of our joyous reunion,

O God,
who alone can probe the depths of the heart,
you hear the prayer of the humble

and justify the repentant sinner.
As we come into your presence,
grant us the gift of humility,
that we may see our sins clearly
and refrain from judging others.
We make our prayer through your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

For our Parish.

O GOD the Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the faithful: Sanctify this parish by thine abiding presence. Enlighten the minds of thy people more and more with the light of the everlasting Gospel. Bring erring souls to the knowledge of God our Saviour; and those who are walking in the way of life, keep steadfast unto the end.

Give patience to the sick and afflicted, and renew them in body and soul.
Guard from forgetfulness of thee those who are strong and prosperous.
Increase in us thy manifold gifts of grace, and make us all to be fruitful in good works; O blessed Spirit, whom with the Father and the Son together we worship and glorify, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord:
And the blessing of God Almighty,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you
always. *Amen*