

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Occasion: Proper 23

Sunday, October 13, 2019

Year (cycle): C

Resource Website Links:

[The Collect/Readings¹](#)

[Book/Passage Summaries²](#)

[Reflection Question\(s\)³](#)

[Art Reflection Slideshow⁴](#)

The Collect:

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Reading 1

Old Testament:

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

1These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 4Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s):

Jeremiah 29: 1,4-7

Mention of King Nebuchadnezzar indicates that Jeremiah's prophecy comes after the Israelites have to leave Jerusalem. Through Jeremiah, God offers instructions to God's people, who are exiled from their promised home. While in exile, God will continue to help them prosper; their relationship is not severed by their relocation; God's grace follows. Metaphorically, this passage shows God speaking to people who experience any form of exile. For example, many people are estranged from their families of origin, and others are refugees who have to live far from their homelands. More broadly, Christian interpretations of Genesis tend to agree that humans all experience an "exile" from the original union with God that was intended.

God instructs us to set down roots despite this exile: build a house, marry someone from the new place, pray that the land will flourish. The prophecy tells us to embrace the place where we find ourselves. Anywhere in creation, we can choose to be joyful and care for one another.

- What steps can you take to flourish in the place where God has set you?
- How can we support people living in literal exile, like the ancient Israelites were?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 2

Psalm 66:1-11

- 1 Be joyful in God, all you lands; *
sing the glory of his Name;
sing the glory of his praise.
- 2 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! *
because of your great strength your enemies
cringe before you.
- 3 All the earth bows down before you, *
sings to you, sings out your Name."
- 4 Come now and see the works of God, *
how wonderful he is in his doing toward all people.

5 He turned the sea into dry land,
so that they went through the water on foot, *
and there we rejoiced in him.

6 In his might he rules for ever;
his eyes keep watch over the nations; *
let no rebel rise up against him.

7 Bless our God, you peoples; *
make the voice of his praise to be heard;

8 Who holds our souls in life, *
and will not allow our feet to slip.

9 For you, O God, have proved us; *
you have tried us just as silver is tried.

10 You brought us into the snare; *
you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.

11 You let enemies ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water; *
but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s):

Psalm: 66:1-11

In the words we call the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13), Jesus affirms that we should ask for what we need in prayer. But the psalms and Jesus both teach us another language of prayer, too: praise. Psalm 66 begins with an instruction to all people: Be joyful in God; sing the glory of God's Name! Praise – music, group worship, prayer – lifts us to a higher plane, out of our daily human existence and closer to alignment with God. The psalm exhorts us to sing the glory of God – not for God's sake, but ours.

- For what gifts can you praise God today?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 3

Epistle:

2 Timothy 2:8-15

8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, 9for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. 10Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. 11The saying is sure:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

12 if we endure, we will also reign with him;

if we deny him, he will also deny us;

13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

14 Remind them of this, and warn them before God that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening. 15Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s):

2 Timothy 2:8-15

Tradition tells us this letter was written by Paul, though scholars widely agree that it was someone writing under Paul's name. The letter is addressed to Timothy, a leader of a young Christian community facing serious divisions. The author writes to instill confidence in Timothy to lead his church. As long as he follows the right path, he will find support in God. We may feel restrained in this world, "but the word of God is not chained" (2 Tim. 2:9, NRSV). The world may seem to be one of scarcity, but in God, there is only abundance.

Talking about Jesus, the letter promises, "If we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us" (v. 12). Will Jesus give up on us if we reject him? Perhaps instead of offering a threat, the letter reveals how closely we are united with Christ; denying him is equivalent to denying ourselves. Our true natures abide in God. The next line continues, "If we are faithless, he remains faithful" (v. 13a). Both are true at the same time:

rejecting Jesus is as dire as denying our true selves, and yet, Jesus remains faithful, regardless of our wavering.

- In what ways are you “chained” in life, and how does God’s word offer abundance?
- In what way does our self-understanding change when we see ourselves first as belonging to God? [Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 4

Gospel:

Luke 17:11-19

11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. 12As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, 13they called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ 14When he saw them, he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were made clean. 15Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. 16He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. 17Then Jesus asked, ‘Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? 18Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ 19Then he said to him, ‘Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.’

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s):

Luke 17:11-19

Jesus heals ten men with leprosy, and only one of them returns to thank him. The text makes sure to mention that this grateful, returning man is not a Galilean but a Samaritan – a foreigner. Today, we think of Samaritans as good, thanks to the Parable of the Good Samaritan earlier in Luke (10:25–37). But in Jesus’ time, Samaritans were the natural foe of any story because they were considered as Gentiles. This Samaritan’s behavior is a reversal, where the outsider expected to behave poorly becomes the model disciple.

A close reading of the narrative reveals two types of healing. First, all ten are “made clean” from their leprosy. But Jesus uses a different word for the one who returns. He says that the man’s faith has “saved” him, according to Young’s Literal Translation. When they ask him for mercy, Jesus alleviates the suffering of all ten of the men. But he only calls the one man “saved” – the one who turned back (repented) and praised God for the miracle.

- Who plays the role of the natural foe in your stories, and what would it mean for them to become the model to follow?
- What is the difference between the one thankful man who was “saved” and the other nine whom Jesus made clean?
- When good things happen, how can we remember to return to God and offer thanks?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Sources

¹ “Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost, ” *The Episcopal Church*, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/lectionary/eighteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-2>

² Chris Haslam, “Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost-October 13, 2019,” *Comments: Revised Lectionary Commentary*, <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/cpr28m.shtml?>

³Helena L. Martin, “Pentecost 18 (C)-October 13, 2019”, *Bible Study*, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/bible-study/bible-study-pentecost-18-c-october-13-2019>

⁴ The Revised Common Lectionary, “Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost Year C”, *Slideshow Formats*, <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/slides.php>