

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

Occasion: Proper 26

Sunday, November 3, 2019

Year (cycle): C

Resource Website Links:

[The Collect/Readings¹](#)

[Book/Passage Summaries²](#)

[Reflection Question\(s\)³](#)

[Art Reflection Slideshow⁴](#)

The Collect:

Almighty and merciful God, it is only by your gift that your faithful people offer you true and laudable service: Grant that we may run without stumbling to obtain your heavenly promises; 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: Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

1 The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw.

2 O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?

Or cry to you 'Violence!'
and you will not save?

3 Why do you make me see wrongdoing
and look at trouble?

Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.

4 So the law becomes slack
and justice never prevails.

The wicked surround the righteous—
therefore judgement comes forth perverted.

1 I will stand at my watch-post,
and station myself on the rampart;

I will keep watch to see what he will say to me,
and what he will answer concerning my complaint.

2 Then the Lord answered me and said:

Write the vision;

make it plain on tablets,
so that a runner may read it.

3 For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie.

If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay.

4 Look at the proud!
Their spirit is not right in them,
but the righteous live by their faith.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

Habakkuk's prophecy begins with pointed questions addressed to God. Habakkuk sees injustice all around. He cries to God, but feels that God does not listen, or does not save. To hear Habakkuk tell it, God even makes Habakkuk witness wrongdoing and evil, and nothing is done about it. In short, Habakkuk is a prophet for our times, who seethes at injustice and isn't afraid to demand where God is. The whole first chapter is a description of just such a trying situation. Far from giving up in frustration or surrendering to injustice, however, Habakkuk resolves to remain faithful. In return, God promises justice, and that the proud will be humbled, and the righteous will live.

- What situations or issues today make you wonder where God is?
- Just as Habakkuk resolved to stand at his watch-post, how can you remain faithful to God and God's mission in the face of injustice?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 2

Psalm 119:137-144

137 You are righteous, O Lord, *
and upright are your judgments.

138 You have issued your decrees *
with justice and in perfect faithfulness.

139 My indignation has consumed me, *
because my enemies forget your words.
140 Your word has been tested to the uttermost, *
and your servant holds it dear.
141 I am small and of little account, *
yet I do not forget your commandments.
142 Your justice is an everlasting justice *
and your law is the truth.
143 Trouble and distress have come upon me, *
yet your commandments are my delight.
144 The righteousness of your decrees is everlasting; *
grant me understanding, that I may live.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Psalm 119:137-144

In this section of Psalm 119, the Psalmist is vexed that God's word is not being followed properly. God and God's decrees are described as good, upright, and just. For the Psalmist, following God's word is both an obligation and a delight. Despite being "small" and "of little account," the author of this song to God follows God's word, and prays that all creation will do likewise. Moreover, the Psalmist seeks understanding of God's word, and that understanding is equated with life. God sits in righteous judgment of all, but many simply do not realize, or do not understand. Yet even in distress, the author revels in God's commandments.

- In what ways do we fail to recognize God's justice and faithfulness?
- What is the benefit of recognizing oneself as "small" and "of little account" in relation to God?
- What understanding might we pray for, in relation to God's will for us and for the world?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 3

Epistle: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our* Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. 4Therefore we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring. 11To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfil by his power every good resolve and work of faith, 12so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

In the beginning of his second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul gives thanks for the faithfulness and love found in that community. He says that he holds them up as an example to everyone he meets, and also that he continues to pray for them, that they might continue along the path that they seem to be on. In addition to faith and love, however, Paul prays for resolve for them, and works of faith. He prays that these will occur by God's power, but it is clear that he thinks these a naturally outgrowth or next step following from faithfulness. It is by resolve and good works that Paul says the name of Jesus will be glorified in the community.

- Is there someone whose faithfulness and love you admire? Have you thought about praying for them, that they might continue on this path?
- Have you ever asked anyone to pray for your faith, or that you might be more loving?
- What works do you feel that God may be leading you to? How might you work to glorify the name of Jesus in your community?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 4

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

1He entered Jericho and was passing through it. 2A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. 3He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. 4So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. 5When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' 6So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. 7All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' 8Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' 9Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. 10For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Luke 19:1-10

The story of Zacchaeus is an interesting one. Jesus simply happens to be passing through Jericho when he sees Zacchaeus in a sycamore tree and tells him to come down so that Jesus can stay at his home that evening. Zacchaeus, of course, is a rich man and a tax collector, and for this reason is a known sinner in the community. He has profited off of his neighbors. And yet, Jesus still comes to him. In the end, Zacchaeus gives away half of his possessions to the poor and pays back anyone he has wronged, but he promises to do so only after he encounters Jesus. Jesus uses Zacchaeus as an example, proclaiming that he, too, is a son of Abraham. While we often speak (and rightly so) of a preferential option for the poor. Zacchaeus, however, is something of a counterexample, showing us that while we should indeed privilege the marginalized, that does not necessarily mean that we should marginalize the privileged.

- How do we as Christians bring the Gospel to all, even those we might think to be sinners?
- What privileges might you have that could be used to spread the Good News?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Sources

¹ “Twenty-First Sunday After Pentecost, ” *The Episcopal Church*, <https://episcopalchurch.org/lectionary/twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-0>

² Chris Haslam, “Twenty-First Sunday After Pentecost-November 3, 2019,” *Comments: Revised Lectionary Commentary*, <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/cpr31m.shtml?>

³ Ian Lasch, “Pentecost 21 (C)-November 3, 2019”, *Bible Study*, <https://episcopalchurch.org/library/bible-study/bible-study-proper-26-c-2016>

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