

Sermon for August 30th, 2026
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

2 Chronicles 28:8-15

8 The men of Israel took captive 200,000 of their relatives, women, sons, and daughters. They also took much spoil from them and brought the spoil to Samaria. **9** But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded, and he went out to meet the army that came to Samaria and said to them, “Behold, because the LORD, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but you have killed them in a rage that has reached up to heaven. **10** And now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. Have you not sins of your own against the LORD your God? **11** Now hear me, and send back the captives from your relatives whom you have taken, for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.”

12 Certain chiefs also of the men of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against those who were coming from the war **13** and said to them, “You shall not bring the captives in here, for you propose to bring upon us guilt against the LORD in addition to our present sins and guilt. For our guilt is already great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.” **14** So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the assembly. **15** And the men who have been mentioned by name rose and took the captives, and with the spoil they clothed all who were naked among them. They clothed them, gave them sandals, provided them with food and drink, and anointed them, and carrying all the feeble among them on donkeys, they brought them to their kinsfolk at Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then they returned to Samaria.

Psalms 32

1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah*

5 I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,”
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah*

6 Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.

7 You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. *Selah*

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,

which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.

10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.

11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Galatians 3:15-22

15 To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. **16** Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. **17** This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. **18** For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. **20** Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. **22** But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Luke 10:25-37

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" **26** He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" **27** And he answered, "You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself." **28** And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" **30** Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. **31** Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. **32** So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. **34** He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35** And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' **36** Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" **37** He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Our text for meditation this Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Old Testament reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

Imagine having a sibling who shamed the family. He left the house at a young age then did drugs, sold drugs, and overdosed on drugs. He regularly calls your parents to scream at them for things they didn't do, alleging some sort of imaginary abuse that makes him feel justified in his rebellion; these conversations are regularly scheduled over when he believes your parents should send him money. Over the years he has been in and out of jail, gotten in plenty of fights, and slept on the streets.

He has a number of illegitimate children that he has sired with his drug addict girlfriends; most of these kids are now in foster care, because he doesn't provide for them. Why would he? He can't hold down a job because he always shows up drunk or high, or argues with management.

Meanwhile, in this hypothetical situation *you* are the good child. You didn't run away, you went to college. You didn't do drugs, you stayed clean. You worked hard to get your own place to live and you waited until marriage to lay with your spouse. You attend Church service every Sunday and do your best to honor your parents. You'll be the first to admit you weren't perfect, but that's just what a good son does – he admits his faults regularly. Your father calls you to get help with his weekend projects and you dutifully spend the whole Saturday getting his projects done.

Now imagine there is yet another argument. Your parents host a family get together, and on the way, you get a speeding ticket from a police officer. You get to the family dinner, still feeling the sting of the ticket, when your good-for-nothing failure of a brother walks into the house. Whiskey is on his breath and there are stains on his raunchy T-shirt (you know, the shirt with scantily clad women on it). He's looking for a fight and slaps you across the face for no reason. Finally after all these years, you snap and decide to fight back...but he wins. You lay there for a few minutes, bloody and sore with a broken jaw, when suddenly a hand picks you up. It's a policeman, who proceeds to put you in handcuffs and have you arrested. Your mother called the police when your brother arrived, and when they get there they recognize you from the speeding ticket they just wrote. Assuming you're the one at fault, they haul you off to jail.

Judah's Loss and God's Justice

How would you feel if you went through such an ordeal? You would probably feel angry at the injustice of it all. Sure, you had your transgression and you paid for it, but this sibling was *so much worse!* What kind of justice is it to have the garbage brother go free while the one who was *trying* to do right gets beaten up and taken away by the cops? So it was with Israel and Judah. While much of the Old Testament is dedicated to outlining the sins of Judah, Northern Israel was far and away the more wretched of the two kingdoms. Having split off from Judah after King Rehoboam refused to cut taxes and forced labor,¹ the Northern ten tribes of Israel quickly abandoned any semblance of faithfulness to God. They worshiped the baals and ashtoreths. They filled the land with oppression and bloodshed. They deliberately set up idols in new temples, complete with golden calves. Of course, Judah certainly had her sins, including periods where wicked kings arose and brought idolatry into the land, but this was offset by occasional repentance and a priesthood that was faithful most of the time.² Not once did the Northern Kingdom truly repent of their abominations. The closest they got was when God sent Elijah to cleanse the land of baal worship, but even that did not get rid of their golden calves.³

So after Israel defeated Judah in war, it must have been severely jarring. Yes, Judah's king at the time, Ahaz, was an evil man; he surpassed Northern Israelite kings in many ways with his idolatry, child sacrifice, and more. But why would God give them into the hand of their wicked brothers? For crying out loud, Israel was so bad that they put a man named Menahem on the throne, who was known to kill every pregnant woman in cities he laid siege to by ripping their wombs open – and Menahem died *peacefully*.⁴ And the current king of Israel, who was waging war on Judah? That was Pekah the son of Remaliah, who was waging this war in an alliance with Rezin the king of Syria, a country that didn't even pretend to worship the true God.⁵

So Israel was worse than Judah, but in this moment they had a triumph, and a brutal one at that. It was only by the word God spoken through Oded the prophet that Judah was spared the total annihilation of mass exile, slavery and execution. It was traumatic enough as it stood to see their young

1 1 Kings 12

2 51% of the time is still most of the time, after all.

3 1 Kings 18

4 2 Kings 15:16-22

5 2 Chronicles 28:5-7

men die *en masse* in war, but for the surviving men to see their women, sons and daughters taken off by the northern tribes to be prostitutes and bondslaves was heart wrenching.

Imagine being one of the survivors left in the land of Judah. You know that your nation has her sins, but to see these paganized apostate cousins of yours take your daughter, how unjust that must feel! And then comes the waiting, the pacing, the anxiety of it all, like being the good brother sitting in a jail cell with a broken jaw. Oh and it was certainly like jail, for the Northern Tribes took as much spoil as they could carry. Judah was left impoverished, starving, mourning her dead and worried sick over the two hundred thousand captives just taken. We can only imagine their relief at seeing these captives return unharmed... relief that was burdened with poverty and perplexity that God had delivered them into the hands of worse men than themselves.

There is a problem of perspective here. The children of Judah could only see that they had been bested by Israel and Syria. All they could do was pick up the pieces and wonder at what our Lord was doing, questioning if He would make it right. They didn't see that God would send a prophet to bring back their loved ones. Further, they *didn't* know that God planned on extinguishing their enemies entirely, punishing their evil in the most devastating fashion. The war started in 732 B.C. Assyria would come and destroy the Syrians entirely that same year. Northern Israel was led into the Assyrian Captivity – which never ended – in 722 B.C., just ten years after the events of our reading. The discipline of loss that was levied on Judah was nothing compared to the wrath that was poured out on Israel; God had no intentions of letting those apostate tribes get away with their sins. In the *moment* it seemed like all was lost as Judah received her women and children back as widows and orphans. But God was not going to allow such injustice to go unnoticed or unpunished.

There was also a restoration for Judah. After the death of Ahaz, Hezekiah rose to the throne. Under his reign, Judah became faithful to God once more, received blessings and wealth, and became strong to withstand the Assyrian invasion long enough until our Lord delivered them. Not only did God deliver harsh justice to Judah's enemies, He also restored the people themselves! Their direct experience vindicates David's hymn, which sings “His anger is but for a moment, and His favor is for a lifetime.”⁶

Conclusion: the Problem of Perspective

We have the same problem of perspective, don't we? We do not see where the Lord is acting in the world. We do not understand what He has planned. We might wonder to ourselves why He permits disaster or why it feels as though He disciplines us harder than others. Lacking the foreknowledge that He has, we will find ourselves lost if we do not *trust* Him with our future. But that is what He asks of you. He asks you and I to trust that He knows what is going on when we don't. He asks for us to trust that He intervenes to do good things in the midst of disaster to help us in our walk with Him. The children of Judah had no clue that God sent Oded to bring their families back, nor they did not understand that their enemies would fall and that Hezekiah would ascend to the throne for the sake of reviving their nation.

In the midst of these trying times, imagine what He must be doing to avert all sorts of disaster on our end! The hypothetical man with the rotten brother might balk at his situation, but he can take comfort knowing that our Lord shall work it all together for his good.⁷ So must we, for such is the essence of justifying faith – entrusting one's future to Jesus, even if things on the ground look awful. He proved His care for our best interests by dying for our sins on the Cross; let us trust Him in *all* things.

Now the Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

⁶ Psalm 30:5

⁷ Romans 8:28