

Sermon for September 6th, 2026
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

Proverbs 4:10-23

- 10** Hear, my son, and accept my words,
that the years of your life may be many.
11 I have taught you the way of wisdom;
I have led you in the paths of uprightness.
12 When you walk, your step will not be hampered,
and if you run, you will not stumble.
13 Keep hold of instruction; do not let go;
guard her, for she is your life.
14 Do not enter the path of the wicked,
and do not walk in the way of the evil.
15 Avoid it; do not go on it;
turn away from it and pass on.
16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong;
they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.
17 For they eat the bread of wickedness
and drink the wine of violence.
18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
which shines brighter and brighter until full day.
19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
they do not know over what they stumble.
20 My son, be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.
21 Let them not escape from your sight;
keep them within your heart.
22 For they are life to those who find them,
and healing to all their flesh.
23 Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life.

Psalms 119:9-16

[Collect text in Bold]

- 9** How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
10 With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!
11 I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
12 Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes!
13 With my lips I declare
all the rules of your mouth.
14 In the way of your testimonies I delight
as much as in all riches.

**15 I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.
16 I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.**

Galatians 5:16-24

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21** envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Luke 17:11-19

11 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. **12** And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance **13** and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” **14** When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. **15** Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; **16** and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. **17** Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? **18** Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” **19** And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

Our text for meditation this Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Gospel reading.

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

Introduction

If you were to go through the one year lectionary, you might notice that the readings for each Sunday are connected. The men who designed the reading plan could see the parallel focus of each text between one or two selected themes. Our Old Testament reading from Proverbs 4 shows King Solomon exhorting his son to seek and follow wisdom; meanwhile our Psalm reading, eight verses from Psalm 119, tells young men where to *find* that wisdom in the Word; then we have our reading from Galatians, which shows us what we *get* from following the Word and its wisdom – the fruits of the Spirit. So when the minister is getting his sermon ready, he can preach on the connections between these passages, or he can select a text and elaborate on the finer points from there.

But every now and then one of the readings will be simply too dense for such a neat categorization. Our Gospel reading for today is not unified with the other texts by a singular theme, being simply too *rich* in meaning with all that it shows us. Jesus cleansing the ten lepers involves much more for us than a singular focus on the Word or the topic of wisdom or holy living in general. Instead, it is as though St. Luke invites us to *bathe* in the event to find ourselves cleansed and refreshed just as the lepers were. So instead of the typical sermon style one find here, let's just spend some time highlighting the different ways we can approach this miracle: in so doing, we will find the greatest benefit. However brief my highlights may be, let's enjoy some spiritual food for spiritual thought.

Jesus' Compassion, Power, and Faithfulness

First, we cannot miss Christ's compassion on display here. Ten lepers ask Him to heal them of their skin conditions. Under the Mosaic Law, someone with leprosy was cast out of society, unable to make sacrifices, unable to live a normal life with his neighbors at all.¹ To be a leper in Israel and Judah was to be in a sort of exile in place: no one wanted to touch you or associate with you, but you were not cast out from the nation. Our Lord heals these men because He knows exactly what they are going through, and He loves them just as much as He loves anyone else.

Not only that, but He shows His power in this moment as well. Jesus does not need to put His hands on someone to perform a miracle. In fact, He does not even need to *say* that He is healing them. To the contrary, it is as though He merely *thought* about it and suddenly they were cleansed. Occasionally you might hear some nonbeliever say that Jesus never claimed to be Divine; I would point them to this passage and ask them why He would even need to say it. Only the Creator of the world, who fashioned the universe by speaking it into existence, would be able to heal someone in this way. And remember, this is the first century we are speaking of here; no one other than God Himself would know enough about human skin and diseases to be able to identify and cure them. No one other than God would know about the molecules that would need to be rearranged, how to reverse cell damage, and how to do so without firing off the nervous system and leaving the leper in severe pain. While Jesus certainly *did* claim to be God,² passages like this demonstrate that He preferred to *show* that this was the case.

Not only this, but think of the faithfulness of Christ that is shown here. Not just faithful to His promises toward man, He also is faithful to the very Word that we all know, read and love. He tells the lepers to go to the priests, which is exactly what the Law of Moses commands someone to do when they are healed of their leprosy. Before they can bring sacrifices to the Temple, they must be examined. My friends, this assures us that Jesus is not some “revolutionary” as modern liberal theologians try to say. He never introduced new doctrine; rather, He knew the Word, followed the Word, and taught the Word because He *is* the Logos from Whom we get the Scriptures in the first place, as St. John says.³ Though He came to fulfill the Law, liberating us all from its accusations, He never preached against what our Lord established.

The Samaritan and the Law

But about that Law... now we arrive at the lepers themselves. Nine of them were Jews, one was a Samaritan. We must not criticize the nine Jews too quickly; they were under the Law, and thus they felt pressure to get to Jerusalem as quickly as possible to present themselves to the priests. My friends, this is just what things were like for people under the Law: there are no excuses for disobedience whatsoever. They may have been grateful that their leprosy was cleansed, but they were likely afraid of being punished if they went back to thank Jesus. After all, there are plenty of times when men with good intentions ended up being *killed* by the Lord for acting on them. When David had the Ark of the Covenant carried to Jerusalem, the cart carrying the Ark slipped back and a man named Uzzah caught it so that it would not fall or be damaged: God killed Uzzah on the spot.⁴ Later on when the kingdom split and God sent a prophet to condemn the evil king Jeroboam, that prophet was told to go straight to Judah without stopping; another prophet lied to him to get him to receive hospitality, and so God had a lion eat the first prophet.⁵ The Law permits no deviation no matter how small. So when Jesus, whom the lepers believed was a prophet, told them to go to the priests, they understood that to mean *right now* with no stopping.

1 The laws concerning leprosy are found in Leviticus 13-14

2 John 10:30

3 John 1:1-14

4 2 Samuel 6:5-11

5 1 Kings 13:11-32

The Samaritan on the other hand was under no such requirements. The Samaritans had a different priesthood and a different law, with no Temple to speak of;⁶ here this non-Samaritan man, Jesus, tells him to go show himself to the priests – but which priests should he go to? He cannot go to the Levitical priesthood in Jerusalem, as they were under orders to *reject* Samaritans. He cannot go to the Samaritan priests, because they would not honor Jesus as a true and healing prophet; they would hear that Jesus told the Samaritan to go to the priests in Jerusalem, and then refuse to honor what happened! Imagine, a Samaritan man being cast out by his coethnics because they would be convinced Jesus was a sorcerer.

So the man was in a bind, and he must have realized it before turning back. The Samaritan cannot go to the Jerusalem Temple, and cannot go to his now former priests. The Law isn't helping him! All he can do is go back to Jesus. So he returns with gratitude, praising the Lord. He bows down to Jesus and thanks Him, recognizing and confessing that He is the Lord. This man rightly concluded that if the Law will not be of any help, and if the command cannot be followed, then all that is left is faith in the one who healed him.

Conclusion: Faith and Thanksgiving

The situation that the Samaritan finds himself in is not unlike where men find themselves today. The Law cannot help us, and we cannot fulfill its commandments. No man can hope to fulfill all the commandments, not even just the core Ten Commandments. Even if we *could* we would still be in trouble, because the means of absolving sin from the Law are all destroyed; there is no earthly altar, tabernacle, or priesthood, no way of expiating one's sins by blood sacrifice. Even worse, we Gentiles do not belong to old Israel, so to the Old Covenant we are nothing but foreigners; we would be rejected the same way the Samaritan would have been if he went to Jerusalem to be examined by the priests. What can we possibly do if we want any hope for salvation? Ah, we must do as the Samaritan leper did; go to the one who healed us. Christ who died for our sakes, taking away the leprosy of sin and the curse of death which was upon our heads. We go to Him who fulfilled the Law with His own Blood, so that its strictures may no longer apply to us. As Christ freed the lepers from their disease, He gives us liberty; let us then go to Him at all times with thanksgiving and faith.

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

⁶ The Samaritan Pentateuch makes some polemic and illegitimate additions to the original Mosaic Law. John Hyrcanus destroyed the original Samaritan Temple in 110 BC.

Sermon for September 13th, 2026
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

1 Kings 17:8-16

8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, **9** “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” **10** So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” **11** And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” **12** And she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” **13** And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. **14** For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.’” **15** And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. **16** The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

Psalm 146

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

2 I will praise the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

3 Put not your trust in princes,
in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.
4 When his breath departs, he returns to the earth;
on that very day his plans perish.

5 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD his God,
6 who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,
who keeps faith forever;

7 who executes justice for the oppressed,
who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets the prisoners free;

8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.

9 The LORD watches over the sojourners;
he upholds the widow and the fatherless,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

10 The LORD will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Galatians 6:1-10

1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit

of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. **2** Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. **3** For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. **4** But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. **5** For each will have to bear his own load. **6** Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. **7** Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. **8** For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. **9** And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. **10** So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Matthew 6:24-34

24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. **25** “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26** Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? **28** And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. **34** “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Our text for meditation this Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Gospel reading.

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

Introduction

In our reading for today, Jesus says that idolatry comes from anxiety. This is to say, our anxieties turn our needs or wants into false gods. It can start very innocently as a man begins worrying about money because the economy has gotten worse and groceries are more expensive. But then he starts fantasizing about what it would be like to be rich, and decides to apply his efforts more strongly in that direction; he increases his hours at work, starts investing in crypto coins, and buying stock options. Over time such a man's heart blackens as he seeks out money above all else, ignoring his wife and children, neglecting Church attendance, and refusing to give a dime to charity.¹ Before long, the man thinks nothing of Christ as he devotes his life to money.

All sorts of pagan false gods were invented from these same anxieties. Phoenician farmers made sacrifices to baal as a deity of storms so that their crops would grow. Lonely Roman men would pray feverishly to venus, “goddess” of love. Greek drunks and vine-dressers alike had religious rites devoted to dionysus the “god” of wine. Canaanite mothers regularly appealed to asherah the fertility “goddess” for help rearing their children. When our Savior says that one cannot worship God and money, He is locating the origin point of all idolatry: anxieties, worries, and obsessions.

¹ Unless of course he can write it off of his taxes.

Solving the Source of Idolatry

Jesus *knows* that we have these anxieties embedded deep within us. It has been this way since the beginning, that we are creatures who *want* and *need* things. Jesus affirms this by reminding us that God *knows* we need food, drink and clothing. How could He not know it? He *made* us this way. Humanity was created to worship the God who provides food, drink, fellowship, and more. When Adam was created, our Lord *showed* the man that he had an inborn need for companionship, and God showed him all the animals that wouldn't fill that need before Eve was brought into existence.² We aren't buddhists who think that desires are bad; but we understand that the needs and wants that are in our bodies and hearts are not the problem – fearing that we shall go without them is.

Jesus tells us that life is more than food and clothing. We may well add that life is more than money, companionship, and more. Whether we have every need filled or not is beside the point. Trusting God for it gives us the right mindset and motivation to live life according to the calling God gave us. For instance, food is a means to an end. Yes, it is essential to our survival, but more importantly a man should focus on how to help his neighbor obtain what *he* needs. Yes, eating good food can be enjoyable in and of itself, but have you considered the fellowship of eating good food with friends? Ah, then the act of eating was not the main thing, but the conversations, the laughter, the strengthened bonds of friendship and even those moments when we get to evangelize to our neighbors over dinner! These are all more important than whether we have enough bites to eat.

Anxiety happens when we take something that is a means to an end, fret over whether we shall obtain it, and forget the goodness of God. In so doing, we make our situation worse, because by forgetting that there is more to life than that one thing we are anxious over, we feel even *more* incomplete and disturbed. That is where obsessions over such uneasiness turns our hearts toward idolatry, because our heart cries out “if I could *just*.” If I could just have more money. If I could just have that companion I wanted. If I could just have justice against this particular enemy, or if I could just have one more beer. This can even extend to our personal feelings of unworthiness: if I could just be a better parent, if I could just be a better Christian, if I could just be recognized at work, and so forth.

Of course, these are not the only sources of anxiety. There are indeed people who have tragic chemical imbalances in their brains which leads them to feel anxious at all times. For such people, the impulse towards idolatry isn't on anything specific, for the afflicted person has this issue stemming from *internal* stimuli instead of the *external* pressures of life. But whether one's anxieties are born from fears or obsessions or a misfiring hormonal system, the answer to this problem requires the same thing. Both the fearful man and the nervous man, whatever treatment they might need, cannot go without a constant awareness of the goodness of God.

The Goodness of God

Our Savior invites us to presume upon the goodness of our Lord. His eternal benevolence, His *love*, is something we sadly forget. Oh we thank God for the food we have before each meal, I am sure. But have you considered that the clothes you are wearing right now are a gift from Him? The roof over your head, the food in your stomach, these are all given to you by Him every day. It doesn't stop there my friends, for He gives you every breath that you take. St. James says that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”³ Everything good in your life – the *truly* good, not the sins that feel good in the moment – everything good that you have and experience is proof of the veritable *flood* of care and love that our Lord has for you. If you are in a Godly relationship with someone, know that the time you have with them is a gift from our Lord. If you are a parent, know that the feeling of joy you received when seeing your child smile for the first time was a blessing from our Lord.

² Genesis 2:18-25

³ James 1:17

When our Savior points out the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, He points out that these creatures do not worry. The bird looks for its food every day without anxiety for the winter. The lily is beautifully dressed without worrying over its petals. Yet while these are fragile, small creatures, their faith in God is stronger than most Christians today. The bluebirds are aware of how much God loves them; the lilies, as far as a plant can be aware of anything, are aware only of God's care for them. How many of us do that? And if we did, would we have the same anxieties that we have today?

My friends, dwell on His compassion and His love for you. It is the love of a good Father who wants the absolute best for you in all things. When you fear there won't be enough money, pray for the Lord's provision and remember all the times He has provided for your needs. Thank Him for His gracious help at all times. When times are stressful and work deadlines are closing in, have you prayed for help and then *expected* it? Let our Lord take care of your needs my friend, for He will not leave you in want forever. And remember the reality of eternal salvation; you may hunger now, but there is no hunger in Paradise. You may feel great stresses now, but there is no stress in Heaven. Entrust your well-being to God, and I can promise you that you will not be left unsatisfied.

Seeking the Kingdom

But let us not get things mixed up. Jesus is *not* telling us to be lazy or entitled. The Christian who is free from anxieties is not free from them by just opening his mouth and expecting God to shove food in it. We must still labor to provide for our families, seek out godly marriages, save our money when we can, and go about business as usual without worrying. But God especially loves that *Pietist* who seeks the Kingdom and righteous living *first*. This begins with the righteousness of Christ. My friends, are you seeking the righteousness of God in the blood of Christ granted in Baptism? Have you reminded yourself that your sins are forgiven before thinking about the mistakes that you have made? Then it goes to the Godly response to the graces poured out on us. Before asking whether you have enough groceries for the month, ask whether you have honored your father and mother today. Before planning out the budget for the month, ask yourself whether you have studied the Scriptures and prayed today!

When our Savior says “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you,” He invites us to live a life that goes beyond food and clothing. Yes, trust that God will take care of all your needs, but trust that He will take care of your needs while you are busy sticking with the Gospel and loving your neighbor, keeping the Ten Commandments, helping those in need, repenting of your sins, providing for the Church's needs and thanking the Lord for all that He has done for you? My friends, if you do all of that before worrying over your needs, you will simply be too busy to be anxious, too busy to be sad even. If men and women lived in this way, when we would never hear about any crisis of depression or deaths of despair! The secret is, living in the present for God makes us immune to tomorrow, which can worry about itself.

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

Sermon for September 20th, 2026
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

1 Kings 17:17-24

17 After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. **18** And she said to Elijah, “What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!” **19** And he said to her, “Give me your son.” And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. **20** And he cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?” **21** Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again.” **22** And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. **23** And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, “See, your son lives.” **24** And the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.”

Psalms 30

1 I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.

3 O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.

5 For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

6 As for me, I said in my prosperity,
“I shall never be moved.”

7 By your favor, O LORD,
you made my mountain stand strong;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.

8 To you, O LORD, I cry,
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:

9 “What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the pit?

Will the dust praise you?

Will it tell of your faithfulness?

10 Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!
O LORD, be my helper!”

11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,

12 that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, **16** that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19** and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Luke 7:11-17

11 Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. **12** As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. **13** And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” **14** Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” **15** And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. **16** Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” **17** And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

Our text for meditation this Sixteenth 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

Our Old Testament reading starts with “After this.” After what exactly? In the preceding verses in the chapter, Elijah had gone to a Gentile town called Zarephath after having called a drought upon Israel. The drought became so bad that this spread to Israel's neighbors, and food became so scarce that when Elijah met this widow in the town, she was preparing what she believed was her final meal with her son before they starved to death... or so she thought. Elijah invites her to step out in faith and feed the prophet with that last meal, promising that the supplies will not run out. Lo and behold, she obeys his words, and the oil and flour are miraculously multiplied for many days.¹

This miracle was recounted in last week's Old Testament reading, and we also read from our Lord Jesus saying that we ought not be anxious for anything; He especially exhorts us to seek first the Kingdom of God, then all the things we need will be provided for us from on high.² This was true of the widow of Zarephath, as she trusted in the Lord and found that He provided just as the prophet said He would. How jarring it must have been for the widow then to lose her son! After all, did she not seek the Kingdom of God first? Did she not live by faith that God would provide? How could this happen?

Tragedy upon the Righteous

Before discussing the widow's son being brought back to life, let yourself feel the same angst she felt my friends. She didn't scream at Elijah for nothing after all. Elijah promised provision, but did not say anything about her son getting ill and collapsing. Can you imagine the desperate questions

¹ 1 Kings 17:8-16

² Matthew 6:24-34

reeling through her mind? The God of Elijah fed the three of them for so many days, only to permit her son to suffer and die. It would be like seeing your uncle be cured of his cancer after years of prayer for his health, only to see that uncle die in a car accident. It is like seeing your prayers for a new job answered after a long period of unemployment, only to be laid off after two months.

The Scriptures make lofty promises for whoever shall entrust their souls to the Lord, saying that God shall provide. But they do not promise that our lives will be easy or free from pain. Most of the prophets were murdered by apostate Israelites, all but two of the twelve Apostles were martyred,³ and the Church has always experienced persecution. We live in a world that is best understood as a battleground between good and evil; the devil and the world hate it when Christians are cared for, and these enemies of ours lash out at every believer – even you, which I am certain you know from personal experience. After all, as St. Paul writes, “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”⁴ And even if we are not being actively persecuted, we still have to deal with the reality of living in a cursed world, one which does not have the wholeness it needs. Things do not go the way they are supposed to – death isn't *supposed* to happen in the first place.

At first, the widow believes that this is about her sins. She cries foul at Elijah, saying that this is bringing her sins to *remembrance*, meaning that they were in her past, forgiven, gone by virtue of Divine pardon. She cries foul, believing this is a sort of double jeopardy situation where she is being accused of something for which she already received forgiveness. Now, clearly this is not the case, as otherwise Elijah would not pray for the boy to be revived. Her situation is more like that of the book of Job; since she has been justified by faith and forgiven of all of her trespasses, this is a true tragedy, not a punishment. She does not *deserve* to lose her son.

I mean that, by the way. If you are forgiven of your sins, then it is out of the question whether such extreme personal tragedy is a punishment from God. Does our Lord *discipline* believers? Yes, the Scriptures say so quite often.⁵ But such discipline is corrective, life-giving, painful in the moment but perceptibly good for you. Killing her son is not that, simple as. The disease which afflicted him was nothing more than one of the many misfortunes that occur in this fallen and chaotic world.

The Messages

Yet God permitted her son's death. Though it was not a punishment on the woman or her son (her son was a believer too), our Lord still had a message to send by letting the illness play out. In fact, He had two messages. The first is quite simple: we must cry to the Lord for help. Our Lord promises to provide for those who trust in Him, just as we discussed last week. He does not promise that our lives will be free from trouble. In fact, knowing that these things *will* happen, He wants us to go straight to Him. The Psalmist says: “When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.” He also says “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”⁶ In our reading, we see Elijah demonstrating that very thing to this new believer by praying for her son.

We are to go to our Lord with our problems, crying out to Him for help and deliverance. This does not guarantee that we will receive our dead back or that we will be cured of any illness, have tons of money, etc. But if God promises to deliver us when we who seek His kingdom call to Him, then that is what He will do. However that deliverance may look, we ask with full confidence that He will fulfill His Word out of His infinite benevolence, for so He has promised. My friends, with this passage you are invited to call out to God with your whole heart to deliver you from trouble and calamity.

The second message being sent in this passage regards the *ultimate* deliverance. When we cry out to God to save us from persecutors or illnesses or debts, we are asking Him to save us from a single

3 St. John spent the remainder of his life in exile, Judas hung himself.

4 2 Timothy 3:12

5 Hebrews 12:3-17

6 Psalm 34:17, 19, also compare Psalm 50:15

problem; by raising the widow's son, He proves to her and to us all that He plans on fixing *every* problem, saving us from all misery. The Lord of all creation, who loves life and all living, shows us a taste of the glorious Resurrection to come by defeating death in this one small instance. It is a preview of His intentions. And how does He do it? By sending *His* only Son to die for our sins, so that whoever believes in Him may live once more, rising from the dead just as the widow's son.

Conclusion

Death is not just a problem, it is *the* problem for us human beings. Looking upon this widow with compassion, our Lord says to her “it is not right for your son to die: My Son will die instead.” And so the boy is raised up, bringing us a moment of promise for eternal life in the Old Testament. When the widow's son is raised, it is our Lord showing her – *and us* – that we who call upon Him for salvation in all our troubles shall receive the greatest salvation of all, deliverance from the weight of mortality which hangs upon our necks at every moment. And with this promise, the Lord of Life calls upon us to entrust ourselves to Him even in moments of grave crisis. Like the widow of Zarephath, let us rejoice that the Word of the Lord shall always ring true.

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

Sermon for September 27th, 2026
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
READINGS

Proverbs 25:6-14

- 6** Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence
or stand in the place of the great,
7 for it is better to be told, "Come up here,"
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.
What your eyes have seen
8 do not hastily bring into court,
for what will you do in the end,
when your neighbor puts you to shame?
9 Argue your case with your neighbor himself,
and do not reveal another's secret,
10 lest he who hears you bring shame upon you,
and your ill repute have no end.
11 A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.
12 Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold
is a wise reprover to a listening ear.
13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest
is a faithful messenger to those who send him;
he refreshes the soul of his masters.
14 Like clouds and wind without rain
is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.

Psalms 2

- 1** Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you."
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.

9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Ephesians 4:1-6

1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Luke 14:1-11

1 One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. **2** And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. **3** And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” **4** But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. **5** And he said to them, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” **6** And they could not reply to these things.

7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, **8** “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, **9** and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. **10** But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. **11** For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Our text for meditation this Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Psalm.

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

Introduction

In our Psalm, king David says that the nations rage and the rulers of the earth plot against God. Naturally, reading this someone might ask how that is the case. In the fourth chapter of Acts,¹ the Apostles state plainly that the Anointed One spoken of in this passage is Jesus – not David – so we know that David is not speaking about himself or any of the pagan kings around him. Yet while the Apostles apply the first two verses to the rulers of the Gentiles in their day (Pilate and Herod), Jesus Himself says that the Psalm is not entirely fulfilled: in Revelation, He says that the saints are to rule with Him, a prophecy that is not yet fulfilled.² In other words, the nations didn't stop raging and the kings of the earth *definitely* didn't stop plotting against our Lord.

¹ Acts 4:23-31

² Revelation 2:27, cf. Revelation 12:5 and 19:15

This raises the question: which kings? How are they plotting? Is there some conspiracy of politicians in the world where they all decide to get together and scheme against the Church? While I am sure there have been in the past, as we all know various secret societies that waged war against Christianity who had plenty of politicians in them,³ this is an insufficient answer. There was no cabal of anti-Christian influencers getting in emperor Diocletian's ear telling him to put believers in chains, he just did it after speaking with the other Roman leaders. The Japanese shogunate did not have to have a secret plot to slaughter Christians, they just did it in agreement with their feudal lords. The simple fact of the matter is, this is what sinners do when they get power, and even Christians leaders are tempted with it.

Whence comes the rebellion?

Allow me to explain. Have you ever asked what it was like to be God? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be all-powerful and worshiped? Rulers get a taste of that. As a leader, you get respect from people, obedience, nifty titles like “your highness” or “your majesty,” tons of riches, and access to all *sorts* of women who would love nothing more than to be a ruler's lover. When you say you want something done, the country bends over backward to do it. They say it's good to be king for a reason; it is the closest thing a man can experience in this world to being divine, or at least according to what a worldly man *thinks* it is like to be divine.

But then in comes the Church. The Church witnesses to the ruler that he is *not* divine, and that he is accountable to the one true God who will judge the living and the dead. The Church tells the king that he is not allowed to sin with his power: he may not enrich himself on the backs of a slave population, he may not accrue a harem for himself, he may not kill people on a whim, and he cannot make up a religion for himself.⁴ God declares outright that no ruler is above the law, whether that is a king, president, prime minister, chancellor, or whatever fancy title he is known by. In other words, that experience I mentioned, where a ruling official gets to see what it would be like to be divine? He is not permitted to avail himself of that opportunity. The king must live like anyone else, even if he is the earthly authority appointed over men.

Historically, rulers have not liked hearing this from the Christians, especially nonbelieving ones. Remember my friends, the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden was caused chiefly by the devil telling Eve that if she and her husband ate the forbidden fruit then they would be *like God*.⁵ Ever since then sinful man has sought after becoming his own deity, and the rulers of men feel like they're getting the closest to that. Tell such a man that he cannot use his power the way *he* wants, and you will quickly find out why sinful men make terrible deities. This temptation is not exclusively found in non-Christian rulers. Christian monarchs have had the same problem, to the point of being willing to execute priests, bishops, theologians, and missionaries. The martyrs of the Reformation prove it.

Before we go any further though, let me remind you that king David does not point solely to the kings of the earth as the problem. *We* are. The nations rage, the peoples plot, that means every last race of man is involved with this general rebellion against God. Every nonbeliever wants to be God, and the flesh of every Christian tells him that he should act as if he already is. So nonbelievers in general war against our Lord in their selfish rage, while believers have to struggle with an internal enemy trying to inspire them to sin.⁶ It's just that the rulers of men are the worst about it. They are the ones who have power, not to supplant our Lord but to persecute His people in a sort of proxy conflict.

3 The Bavarian Illuminati, the Hellfire Clubs of the 18th century, organized neopaganism, etc.

4 Deuteronomy 17:14-20 lists commands regarding Israel's kings which, though not directly applicable to today's kings, still shows God's moral commands that *do* apply to them.

5 Genesis 3:1-7

6 Romans 7:14-25

The End of Rebellion

So mankind rebels against God, and the rulers of man are the worst offenders. But our Lord is the undisputed King of all reality, being the only truly all-powerful Creator of the universe. Our Heavenly Father isn't going to allow some pipsqueak humans to get away with trying to take over His world. He will extinguish the pride of mankind and all of their aspirations to divinity by bringing severe wrath upon them. He gave all authority in Heaven and earth to His only begotten Son:⁷ these men have no claim to what He alone can give. And so that very Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, will return to judge the living and the dead. When that day arrives, these rebels will find all of their hopes dashed upon the rock as they are tossed into the lake of fire.

The reality is that the rebellion of mankind will end. For each one of us, it will end in one of two ways. Either you will find yourself among those who plotted and raged against God, thrown into eternal suffering, or you will take the one route given for deliverance. Knowing full well that mankind decided to be His enemy, our Lord loves the world enough to have sent His only Son, Jesus, to die in our places and take the wrath we deserve.⁸ So then if any man wants to benefit from this great mercy he must believe on the Lord Jesus, as David poetically says “kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way.”

Once a man is saved, he must then serve the Lord. With fear, joy and trembling he is to belong to our God who promises to slaughter the unjust. Fear, because we rightly understand that our loving God has no obligation to be “nice” to us; whenever you see a condemned nonbeliever, remember that you were just like him once and slated for the same wrath. Joy, because we are delivered *from* that wrath, and so our service unto God is worth it; He rewards those who belong to Him. Trembling, for we know that the way is perilous; sin lies close at hand to try to dominate us, the devil seeks to devour us, and the world hates us.⁹ The Lord is the only One who can preserve us in salvation.

Conclusion

My friends, this Psalm speaks to a great and awe-striking truth. When Jesus Christ returns, He will return either as your Savior...or as your Judge. Politicians have historically had the hardest time with this, deciding to “shoot the messenger” by attacking believers or trying to control and manipulate them. They do this instead of accepting the reality, obeying the Gospel invitation to be saved, and being sanctified. They could serve with fear, joy and trembling, but deep down they know that this means giving up what they feel is the closest thing to being God.

While the Christian has freedom in forming their political opinions (as long as you make your politics submit to Christ instead of the other way around, you are fine), we have far less difficulty in this than the authorities do. This is why St. Paul tells us to pray “for kings and all who are in high positions,”¹⁰ for our best earthly lives are lived under human authorities who submit to God in humility. While I personally believe in having a *very* limited government to reduce the temptation on those rulers to overstep their bounds, whatever your politics are it is good to pray that they limit themselves in their own hearts. In so doing, we too submit ourselves to the One who has saved us.

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

⁷ Matthew 28:18

⁸ John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁹ Romans 7:23, 1 Peter 5:8, John 15:18-19

¹⁰ 1 Timothy 2:2