

JOHN 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because they have refused to believe in the name of God's only Son. On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world people have shown they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear their actions should be exposed; but the one who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what they do is done in God.'

COMMENTARY: Jesus came to save, not to condemn. Salvation is what we will find when we turn to Jesus. We misunderstand if we are afraid of being condemned.

We have an instinctive knowledge when things are wrong, so we need to ask for the grace of loving the light.

Liturgy of The Word

4th SUNDAY OF LENT

3.10.24



Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

By the rivers of Babylon there we sat and wept,
remembering Zion;
on the poplars that grew there we hung up our harps.

For it was there that they asked us, our captors,
for songs, our oppressors, for joy.
'Sing to us,' they said, 'one of Zion's songs.'

O how could we sing the song of the Lord
on alien soil?
If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!

O let my tongue cleave to my mouth if I remember
you not,
if I prize not Jerusalem above all my joys!

(From Ps 137)

2 CHRONICLES 36:14-16,19-23

All the heads of the priesthood, and the people too, added infidelity to infidelity, copying all the shameful practices of the nations and defiling the Temple that the Lord had consecrated for himself in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger after messenger, since he wished to spare his people and his house. But they ridiculed the messengers of God, they despised his words, they laughed at his prophets, until at last the wrath of the Lord rose so high against his people that there was no further remedy.

Their enemies burned down the Temple of God, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, set fire to all its palaces, and destroyed everything of value in it. The survivors were deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; they were to serve him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. This is how the word of the Lord was fulfilled that he spoke through Jeremiah, ‘Until this land has enjoyed its sabbath rest, until seventy years have gone by, it will keep sabbath throughout the days of its desolation.’

And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord that was spoken through Jeremiah, the Lord roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom: ‘Thus speaks Cyrus king of Persia, “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him! Let him go up.”’

COMMENTARY: The psalm on the front you may recognise. It was made popular in song some years ago. The text above tells how the people of God were deported to Babylon and the psalm reveals their struggle to pray or sing songs to the Lord when on alien soil. So their prayer becomes one of asking for the grace that they never forget Zion, the original place of grace for them.

What is the one grace I want most of all?

EPHESIANS 2:4-10

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ – it is through grace that you have been saved – and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God’s work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

COMMENTARY: Grace means gift and all is gift. To appreciate that we are God’s work of art is grace and the more we see into it, the greater should be our response. This journey lasts well beyond a lifetime as Christ is infinitely rich in grace.