

23rd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

November 17, 2019

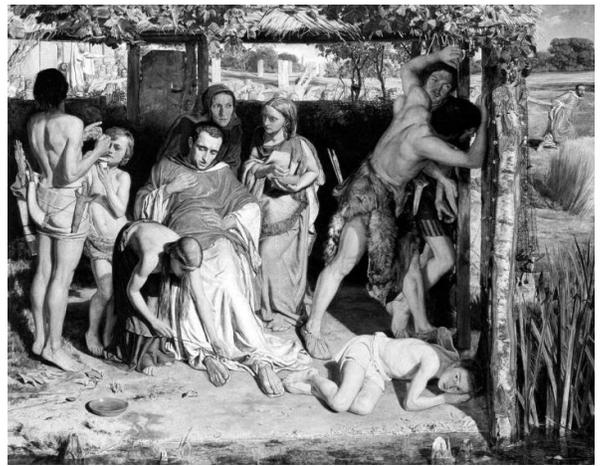
Year C, Revised Common Lectionary

Isaiah 65:17-25 For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD-- and their descendants as well. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent--its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

Isaiah 12 You will say in that day: I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, and you comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. *[** In a very few instances, no Psalm reading is offered for reasons relating to the thematic nature of the Day.]*

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate.

For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.



A CONVERTED BRITISH FAMILY SHELTERING A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY FROM THE PERSECUTION OF THE DRUIDS, William Holman Hunt, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, UK, 1850

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Holman_Hunt_-_A_Converted_British_Family.jpg

Luke 21:1-19 He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down." They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?" And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them. "When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. "But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.

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Reflection & Questions

In many ways, this is the last Sunday of the Lectionary, or Christian Year. Next Sunday, Christ the King Sunday, is a bridge that will connect us to the beginning of the new year that begins with the 1st Sunday of Advent on December 1. We began the year last **Advent** season by hearing the prophets' call to watch and wait for the new thing that God would do—to watch and wait for the coming of light into a dark world—to watch and wait for the coming of the Messiah. It is fitting that we end the Lectionary Year by hearing God's promise to “create a new heavens and a new earth” in Isaiah 65:17.

As we make our way through the scriptures during the lectionary year, we hear the story of God's promise to send the Messiah into the world. We celebrate that promise in the birth of Jesus, the Christ Child, at **Christmas**. We hear of his baptism and ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing as he proclaims the coming of God's Kingdom throughout the season of **Epiphany**. At the heart of the Christian year is the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, with the seasons of **Lent** and **Easter**. God's promise of new life takes on new meaning for Jesus' disciples as we celebrate his **Ascension** and the **Day of Pentecost** when the church is born and given the new life of the Spirit to continue Christ's ministry of making disciples to live as God's resurrection people until the time when God's promise is finally fulfilled, when we greet the dawn of God's new creation and Christ's coming again in glory.

Hope is the theme that underlies all of today's passages. The Old Testament texts proclaim that God has a wonderful promise and plan that will be realized in the end. The New Testament texts take the darker side of the promise and plan, warning that though God's good plan will one day be realized, there will be some tough times before that happens. Still, it is in such times that we need to live in hope, by living as good stewards of the hope and gifts that God has entrusted to us.

- Read Isaiah 65:17-25. What “former things” shall not be remembered? What new things are coming? What do you hope to forget? What do you anticipate with hope?
- Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13. Paul established the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia and its most populous city. It was a flourishing seaport and a free city of the Roman Empire situated on the Via Egnatia, the imperial highway that extended from Asia through Greece to the Adriatic. The city was cosmopolitan and included adherents of many diverse religions. Earlier in his letters, Paul praised the Thessalonian church for its faithfulness and commitment to the Gospel of Christ in the midst of all of these competing faiths as they faced opposition and persecution. However, it seemed that some problems were beginning to brew from within the church. Frenzied members believed that the Day of the Lord was at hand. Many wondered whether Christians who had died before the promised second coming would share in the joy of that event. They wondered when it would finally come. Rumors abounded and many believers were confused about how they should live in the period before the end of time; some thought they should put aside their daily work to prepare for the Day of the Lord, and in so doing, they soon became dependent upon others and took advantage of them. Paul had to calm the frenzy and point out that none of the expected signs of the end had actually occurred yet. He also had to deal with the matter of how to handle disruptive members. That issue forms the background against which today's text is set. In v.13 he exhorts them to keep doing their daily work for the community, “do not be weary in doing what is right.” When have you felt worn out or discouraged by “doing what is right?” How does hope in God's promises keep you going?
- Read Luke 21:1-19. Jesus tells the disciples as they are observing people making offerings at the temple that the widow has contributed “out of her poverty.” In what ways does the widow's offering demonstrate hope in God's promise? In what ways does it reflect God's abundance?