

Friday, March 20, 2020

Collect of the Day

Grant us, O Lord our Strength, a true love of your holy Name; so that, trusting in your grace, we may fear no earthly evil, nor fix our hearts on earthly goods, but may rejoice in your full salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Lessons

Psalm 81:8-14

- 8 Hear, O my people, and I will admonish you: *
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!
- 9 There shall be no strange god among you; *
you shall not worship a foreign god.
- 10 I am the Lord your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt and said, *
“Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.”
- 11 And yet my people did not hear my voice, *
and Israel would not obey me.
- 12 So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their hearts, *
to follow their own devices.
- 13 Oh, that my people would listen to me! *
that Israel would walk in my ways!
- 14 I should soon subdue their enemies *
and turn my hand against their foes.

Hosea 14:1-9

1 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. 2 Take words with you and return to the LORD; say to him, "Take away all guilt; accept that which is good, and we will offer the fruit of our lips. 3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy." 4 I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. 5 I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon. 6 His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon. 7 They shall again live beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden; they shall blossom like the vine, their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon. 8 O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; your faithfulness comes from me. 9 Those who are wise understand these things; those who are discerning know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

Mark 12:28-34

28 One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; 33 and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Reflection

Grant us, O Lord our Strength, a true love of your holy Name; so that, trusting in your grace, we may fear no earthly evil, nor fix our hearts on earthly goods, but may rejoice in your full salvation

Yesterday, I was supposed to go to Seattle to visit my daughter and other family living there. After months of planning and preparation, Rebecca and I had to postpone it for obvious reasons. In my anger and disappointment at my plans not going as I wanted, I have this collect today reminding me that the unexpected in life often happens, and it could be a lot worse than a trip being postponed. So much conversation going on about loss of what we might call earthly goods. And yet, we need to hold fast to the understanding that God is not about stuff, but about loving God and loving neighbor. It is making sure people are safe and the community knows to care for one another. Such a perspective is a hard lesson to take when I looked forward to our trip. At the same time, as long as family and friends are safe, working on keeping healthy, keeping up with one another - that is what matters. As we learn to trust God when life is good and in the midst of the storm, we find the strength to endure as we show our love of God in our care for our neighbor. A perspective Jesus offered to the scribe then and us now. May our Lord's perspective be the source and guide for our own perspectives of living lives as disciples.