

## Bible Tuesday for Pentecost IV, 2019

Isaiah 66:10-14

10 Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her— 11 that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom. 12 For thus says the Lord: I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees. 13 As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. 14 You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bodies shall flourish like the grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the Lord is with his servants, and his indignation is against his enemies.

In this final chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, the whole of the book is summarized. The people of Judah have fallen away from God and God allowed them to be punished by the Babylonians, who took the wealthy and educated into captivity, leaving the tradespeople and farmers to pay tribute in kind. The Babylonians sacked Jerusalem, burning the city and utterly destroying the Temple, and desecrating the holy city. For the people of Judah, those left in the land and those in captivity, the loss of the Temple was devastating. The Temple was where Yahweh, God, resting His feet and His power. If the Temple was gone, how could they worship God?! How could they offer the sacrifices and ceremonies prescribed in Leviticus?! How could they be Israelites?!

The Israelites were in captivity for more than 50 years and were finally allowed to return to Canaan when Babylonia was defeated by Persia. While they were thrilled to go home, they were devastated by the condition of Jerusalem when they arrived. Since they had been taken captive as the city was being sacked, they never took in the full scope of the rubble that was left. Many returning captives were born in Babylonia and never saw the city, save through their parents' eyes.

The above passage of the end of Isaiah promises that Jerusalem will be restored. The metaphor of a healthy mother making plenty of milk to nurse her child is used. As a hungry infant is satiated to the point of sleep at its mother's breast, so will the Israelites be satisfied, comforted, and nurtured again in the city of Jerusalem, on Mount Zion where the Temple will be restored.

Finally verse 13 reminds Israel and us all that it is not a city who comforts, but God Himself who feeds, protects, satiates and nurtures God's children so that they might flourish, and serve God.

### Psalm 66:1-9

1 Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; 2 sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise. 3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you. 4 All the earth worships you; they sing praises to you, sing praises to your name." (Selah) 5 Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds among mortals. 6 He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There we rejoiced in him, 7 who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations— let the rebellious not exalt themselves. (Selah) 8 Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard, 9 who has kept us among the living, and has not let our feet slip.

This psalm celebrates God's acts of salvation for the Israelites, both bringing them out of Egypt and, centuries later, out of Babylonia. The psalmist admonishes not only Israel, but all creation, to join in praising God.

"Selah" – is a word that is untranslatable; that is, it only appears in the book of Psalms and cannot be translated in context. The word merely appears within psalms, as above. Since the book of Psalms is comprised of the lyrics of hymns without melodies, it has been assumed that "selah" is a musical term of some sort, perhaps calling for an instrumental interlude at this point in the psalm.

Baal is a god of the ancient Canaanites, one that the Israelites periodically have worshipped, breaking their covenant with Yahweh, God. The legend of Baal is that he defeated the god of the sea and the god of the river, thus gaining control of the earthly water ways. In verse 6 of this psalm, the words for "sea" and "river" are the names of these gods. The psalmist uses them to say that Yahweh is greater than all gods, for he didn't just defeat the gods, as Baal did, Yahweh controls all water, allowing His children, the Israelites to cross the water on dry ground.

Baal, as well as the other pagan gods of Canaan, was a capricious god, sometimes benevolent to humans and sometimes evil and violent. In verse 5, the psalmist calls Israel's and all creation's attention to the wonders Yahweh has done for humans. No caprice with Yahweh, only covenant love.

### Galatians 6:1-16

6 My friends, <sup>\*</sup> if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil <sup>\*</sup> the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. <sup>4</sup> All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. <sup>5</sup> For all must carry their own loads. <sup>6</sup> Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher. <sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. <sup>8</sup> If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. <sup>9</sup> So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for

we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. <sup>11</sup>See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! <sup>12</sup>It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup>Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. <sup>14</sup>May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which\* the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup>For\* neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! <sup>16</sup>As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

This is the final chapter of Paul's letter to the congregation in Galatia. While the first verse is fairly clear, "Be compassionate and tender when you point out the sins of others. If you correct others, be sure that you are acting for that one and for Jesus, and not for your own ego or self-righteousness." However, verses 2-5 are very difficult to understand. Paul commands that we shoulder each other's burdens in love, which is loving God with all that we are and loving our neighbors as ourselves, thereby fulfilling the law. However, in verse 5 Paul states "all must carry their own loads." What?! Some scholars suggest that verse 5 refers to the final judgment, while others suggest that verse 3 through 5 are a counter example to Paul's teaching. If folks think they are more than capable of dealing with their own burdens and refuse help, flying solo, they are not living in the faith community as Jesus taught; therefore, they end up shouldering their own burdens alone.

When Paul wrote letters to the congregations, he generally dictated them. Scholars think at verse 7 or 8; Paul took the pen himself and made one final statement on the major issue for the Galatian congregation, circumcision. His comments about working for the good point in this same direction. This issue is this: Jewish men were circumcised from Abraham onward as a sign of God's covenant with them. Circumcision bared a man's most intimate member to God, an indication of complete vulnerability to and trust in God, Yahweh. All of Jesus' disciples and apostles were Jews. However, Jesus commanded them to "Go make disciples of all nations..." meaning that the gospel of Jesus, and baptism into that gospel, was to be opened to all humanity, definitely not just Jews. However, most of the apostles and first disciples believed that any non-Jew who came to believe in Jesus and be baptized also had to be circumcised. They believed this because it was through circumcision that one came into the covenant between God and Abraham, the covenant which Jesus fulfilled. Philip did not practice this and Paul argued forcefully against this. Paul taught that Jesus was a new covenant, as per his words over the Last Supper, "This is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people." Therefore baptism replaced circumcision as the entrance rite into the covenant.

Luke 10:1-20

<sup>10</sup>After this the Lord appointed seventy\* others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.

Jesus is confident enough in the faith and capabilities of his disciples that he has "set his face toward Jerusalem for arrest and crucifixion. To teach the disciples how to

evangelize without him, Jesus sends them out in pairs to prepare a town for his arrival.

<sup>2</sup>He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.

Jesus, himself, is the Lord of the Harvest and now he is sending his laborers out.

<sup>3</sup>Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup>Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road.

The lack of baggage serves a few purposes: 1 They won't be targets for bandits. 2 Without supplies, they are also completely dependent on God to provide for them and will grow in trust of God when God does! 3 When they come to a town emptyhanded, the townspeople are more likely to respond to God's call to host them instead of sending them to the local inn.

<sup>5</sup>Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" <sup>6</sup>And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.

"Peace" – English for "shalom" which means "complete inner contentment and satiation. The opposite of anxiety, fear, and desperation."

Jesus says to the disciples, "You offer what I have given to you, the shalom of God. If they don't want that, don't get angry or threaten or attempt to punish. Merely receive back the shalom which is yours and move on."

<sup>7</sup>Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house.

Jesus teaches that ministry, evangelism, is labor which is worth pay, in this case free room and board. Staying in one house for the duration of one's stay is for the happiness of the community. Imagine the competition that might arise between households if the disciples stayed at a different house every night.

<sup>8</sup>Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup>cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." <sup>10</sup>But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>"Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near." <sup>12</sup>I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

"If you are welcomed, do ministry there and proclaim that in this way, this town has experienced the Kingdom of God. If you are not welcomed, don't take that with you, not even the dust from their streets. Shake it off and go to the next town. They are allowed to react to you the way they choose. Don't let that impede your mission in my name. I will deal with that later, not you."

<sup>13</sup> 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>14</sup>But at the judgement it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. <sup>15</sup>And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven?

No, you will be brought down to Hades.

These are towns in which Jesus attempted to preach and teach which rejected him, including his home base of Capernaum.

<sup>16</sup> 'Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.'

This passage sounds like it came from the gospel of John. Jesus reminds the disciples that whether they are welcomed or rejected, they are on God's mission and it is God who is ultimately being welcomed or rejected. None of this is on the disciples or about them.

17 The seventy<sup>\*</sup> returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' 18 He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.

It is impossible to know exactly what Jesus meant by this. This and one other similar passage are what gave rise to the doctrine of Satan being a fallen angel and all of the dogma that surrounds that.

19 See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

No matter what power has been given to the disciples, apostles, and us, it is inconsequential. What matters is that God has a relationship with us that neither this life nor death will end.