



Daily Prayer
+ Thursday, May 21, 2020 +

Invocation

L: Christ is risen!

C: He is risen, indeed! Alleluia.

Psalmody

Psalm 108:7-13

L: God has promised in his holiness: "With exultation I will divide up Shechem and portion out the Valley of Succoth.

C: Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my scepter.

L: Moab is my washbasin; upon Edom I cast my shoe; over Philistia I shout in triumph."

C: Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?

L: Have you not rejected us, O God? You do not go out, O God, with our armies.

C: Oh grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man!

L: With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes.

C: Glory be to Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Hymn

#486, v. 1-2

[1] If Christ had not been raised from death

Our faith would be in vain,

Our preaching but a waste of breath,

Our sin and guilt remain.

But now the Lord is ris'n indeed;

He rules in earth and heav'n:

His Gospel meets a world of need--

In Christ we are forgiv'n.

[2] If Christ still lay within the tomb
Then death would be the end,
And we should face our final doom
With neither guide nor friend.
But now the Savior is raised up,
So when a Christian dies
We mourn, yet look to God in hope--
In Christ the saints arise!

Reading

Acts 6:8-15

And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us." And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

L: O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Thanks be to God.

Devotional Message from Pastor Thompson

Our reading today from Acts 6 continues the account of lay leadership in the church with the account of Stephen.

Earlier in the chapter, Luke noted that one of the men chosen by the apostles to lead the mercy work of the congregations was Stephen, a man of *"good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom"* (Acts 6:3) Stephen was a man, *"full of faith and of the Holy Spirit"*. (Acts 6:5) The congregations had laid their hands on Stephen and the other men and appointed them to a ministry of mercy.

That being the case, it's no surprise in our reading today that Stephen was found to be *"full of grace and power"* and *"doing great wonders and signs among the people"*. (Act 6:8) Clearly God was working through Stephen to carry out the work of the early church.

This, of course, raised suspicion and anger among the opponents of the early church. Some men rose up and disputed with Stephen and opposed his message. They accused him of speaking against God and against Moses and they brought him before the council to answer for his refusal to keep quiet about Jesus, as the apostles had been directed. This arrest led to a long speech and defense by Stephen before the council. We will read Stephen's sermon tomorrow.

What is important to note, for now, is that Stephen is not a pastor. He's not one of the apostles and his primary work is not preaching. Stephen was a lay leader in the church,

involved in mercy work. But, when the occasion arose, Stephen was given an opportunity to speak his faith and he would do so.

This is a reminder that we are all involved in the work of evangelism. On occasion, when the situation calls for it, each of us will be given an opportunity to share what we know of Christ, his love and salvation. It is not only pastors who preach or teach about Jesus. Occasions arise when each of us are given an opportunity to share the love we have found in Jesus with others.

For Stephen, his opportunity to speak of Christ followed naturally from his works of mercy. For you, the opportunity to speak will follow naturally from your daily life of service to your family and your community.

As Peter writes, *"In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."* (1 Peter 3:15)

Our mission calls for the evangelization of the world and we are all involved in that: pastors and people. Keep an eye open for opportunities to share Christ in your own life, by word and deed. Keep an eye open for opportunities to invite people to church. And always be ready to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you. With gentleness and respect. Amen.

Apostles' Creed

C: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

C: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Collect

L: Lord God, heavenly Father, we pray for the well-being of your church throughout the world. So guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit that all who profess themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing

L: Let us bless the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

L: The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C: Amen.

Hymn

#486, v. 3

[3] If Christ had not been truly raised
His Church would live a lie;
His name should nevermore be praised,
His words deserve to die.
But now our great Redeemer lives;
Through Him we are restored;
His Word endures, His Church revives
In Christ, our risen Lord.