

## **Twenty third Sunday after Pentecost October 23, 2016**

**Collect:** Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

### **Old Testament Joel 2: 23 – 32 read from the New Revised Standard Version Bible**

O children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the later rain, as before. The threshing floors shall be full of grain, the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent against you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit. I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

### **The Word of the Lord**

### **Psalm 65 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer**

1 You are to be praised, O God, in Zion; \* to you shall vows be performed in Jerusalem.

2 To you that hear prayer shall all flesh come, \* because of their transgressions.  
3 Our sins are stronger than we are, \* but you will blot them out.  
4 Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there! \* they will be satisfied by the beauty of your house, by the holiness of your temple.  
5 Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation, \* O Hope of all the ends of the earth and of the seas that are far away.  
6 You make fast the mountains by your power; \* they are girded about with might.  
7 You still the roaring of the seas, \* the roaring of their waves, and the clamor of the peoples.  
8 Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your marvelous signs; \* you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.  
9 You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; \* the river of God is full of water.  
10 You prepare the grain, \* for so you provide for the earth.  
11 You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; \* with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase.  
12 You crown the year with your goodness, \* and your paths overflow with plenty.  
13 May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, \* and the hills be clothed with joy.  
14 May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; \* let them shout for joy and sing.

**The Epistle 2 Timothy 4: 6 – 8, 16 – 18 read from the New Revised Standard Version Anglicised Bible**

As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

At my first defence no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from

the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## **The Word of the Lord**

### **The Gospel: Luke 18: 9 – 14 read from the Revised Standard Version Bible**

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

## **The Gospel of the Lord**

### **Closing Prayer: On October 26th we remember Alfred the Great, King of the West Saxons**

When the Gospel was first preached in Britain, the island was inhabited by Celtic peoples. In the 400's, pagan Germanic tribes, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, invaded Britain and drove the Christian Celts out of what is now England into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The new arrivals (called collectively the Anglo-Saxons) were then converted by Celtic missionaries moving in from the one side and Roman missionaries moving in from the other. (They then sent missionaries of their own, such as Boniface, to their pagan relatives on the Continent.) In the 800's the cycle partly repeated itself, as the Christian Anglo-Saxons were invaded by the Danes, pagan raiders, who rapidly conquered the northeast portion of England. They seemed about to conquer the entire country and eliminate all resistance when they were turned back by Alfred, King of the West Saxons.

Alfred was born in 849 at Wantage, Berkshire, youngest of five sons of King Aethelwulf. He wished to become a monk, but after the deaths of his father and his four older brothers

(presumably all in battles), he was made king in 871. He proved to be skilled at military tactics, and devised a defensive formation which the Danish charge was unable to break. After a decisive victory at Edington in 878, he reached an agreement with the Danish leader Guthrum, by which the Danes would retain a portion of northeastern England and be given other concessions in return for their agreement to accept baptism and Christian instruction.

Guthrum, from his point of view, agreed to become a vassal of Christ. His nobles and chief warriors, being his vassals, were thereby obligated to give their feudal allegiance to Christ as well. They accepted baptism and the presence among them of Christian priests and missionaries to instruct them. The door was opened for conversions on a more personal level in that and succeeding generations.

In his later years, having secured a large degree of military security for his people, Alfred devoted his energies to repairing the damage that war had done to the cultural life. He brought in scholars from Wales and the Continent with whose help various writings of Bede, Augustine of Canterbury, and Gregory the Great were translated. He was much impressed by the provisions in the Law of Moses for the protection of the rights of ordinary citizens, and gave order that similar provisions should be made part of English law. He promoted the education of the parish clergy. He wrote: "He seems to me a very foolish man, and very wretched, who will not increase his understanding while he is in the world, and ever wish and long to reach that endless life where all shall be made clear."

Alfred died on October 26th 899, and was buried in the Old Minster at Winchester. Alone among English monarchs, he is known as "the Great."

**Let us pray:** God, who called your servant Alfred to an earthly throne that he might advance your heavenly kingdom, and gave him zeal for your Church and love for your people: Grant that we, inspired by his example and prayers, may remain steadfast in the work you have given us to do for the building up of your reign of love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**