

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, September 23, 2018

The Collect: Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Track 1 Old Testament: Proverbs 31:10-31 read from the Lexham English Bible

A woman of excellence, who will find? For her worth is far more than precious jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and gain he will not lack. She does him good, but not harm all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, and she works with the diligence of her hands.

She is like the ships of a merchant; from far off she brings her food; And she arises while it is still night, and gives food to her household, and tasks to her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it, from the fruit of her hand she plants a vineyard. She girds her waist in strength, and makes her arms strong. She perceives that her merchandise is good; her lamp does not go out in the night.

Her hands she puts onto the distaff, and her palms hold a spindle. Her palm she opens to the poor, and her hand she reaches out to the needy. She does not fear for her house when it snows, for her entire household is clothed in crimson. She makes for herself coverings; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

Her husband is known at the gates, in his seat among the elders of the land. Linen garments she makes and sells, and she supplies sashes for the merchants. Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the future.

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and instruction of kindness is upon her tongue. She looks after the ways of her household, and the bread of idleness she will not eat. Her children rise and consider her happy, her husband also, and he praises her; "Many daughters have done

excellence, but you surpass all of them.” Charm is deceit and beauty is vain; but a woman who fears Yahweh shall be praised. Give to her from the fruit of her hand, and may they praise her works in the city gates.

The Word of the Lord

Track 2 Old Testament: Jeremiah 11:18-20 read from the Lexham English Bible

Moreover, Yahweh let it be made known to me, and I knew. Then you showed me their deeds. And I was like a gentle ram-lamb that is brought to slaughter, and I did not know that they planned plans against me, saying, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name will no longer be remembered.”

But O Yahweh of hosts, who judges in righteousness, who tests the inmost being, and the mind, let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have revealed my legal case.

The Word of the Lord

Track 1: Psalm 1 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, * nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!

2 Their delight is in the law of the Lord, * and they meditate on his law day and night.

3 They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; * everything they do shall prosper.

4 It is not so with the wicked; * they are like chaff which the wind blows away.

5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes, * nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.

6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, * but the way of the wicked is doomed.

Track 2: Psalm 54 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 Save me, O God, by your Name; * in your might, defend my cause.

2 Hear my prayer, O God; * give ear to the words of my mouth.

3 For the arrogant have risen up against me, and the ruthless have sought my life, * those

who have no regard for God.

4 Behold, God is my helper; * it is the Lord who sustains my life.

5 Render evil to those who spy on me; * in your faithfulness, destroy them.

6 I will offer you a freewill sacrifice * and praise your Name, O Lord, for it is good.

7 For you have rescued me from every trouble, * and my eye has seen the ruin of my foes.

Epistle: James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a read from The Message Bible

Do you want to be counted wise, to build a reputation for wisdom? Here's what you do: Live well, live wisely, live humbly. It's the way you live, not the way you talk, that counts. Mean-spirited ambition isn't wisdom. Boasting that you are wise isn't wisdom. Twisting the truth to make yourselves sound wise isn't wisdom. It's the furthest thing from wisdom—it's animal cunning, devilish conniving. Whenever you're trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the others' throats.

Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.

Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves. You lust for what you don't have and are willing to kill to get it. You want what isn't yours and will risk violence to get your hands on it.

You wouldn't think of just asking God for it, would you? And why not? Because you know you'd be asking for what you have no right to. You're spoiled children, each wanting your own way.

So let God work his will in you. Yell a loud no to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet yes to God and he'll be there in no time.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: Mark 9:30-37 read from the Modern English Version Bible

They departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He was teaching His disciples, saying, "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. After He is killed, He will rise the third day." But they did not understand the teaching and were afraid to ask Him.

He came to Capernaum. And being in the house, He asked them, "What was it that you disputed among yourselves on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had disputed among themselves who was the greatest.

He sat down and called the twelve. And He said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."

He took a child and set him in their midst. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever receives one of these children in My name receives Me. And whoever receives Me receives not Me, but Him who sent Me."

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On September 23rd we remember Thecla, Apostle and proto-martyr among Women. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

Thecla widely known as a disciple of the apostle Paul, was one of the most popular female saints in the early Church. Her story is told in the second century Acts of Paul and Thecla. According to this narrative, upon hearing Paul preach the gospel, Thecla abandoned her plans for marriage and followed Paul. Condemned to burn at the stake, her life was saved by a miraculous thunderstorm. As her adventures continued, she was thrown to the beasts in the local arena. There she was protected by a fierce lioness. Finally, thinking this was her last chance to be baptized, she threw herself into a pool with ravenous seals and baptized herself in the water, while the seals were struck dead by lightning. The governor then released her,

and she went on to travel and preach the gospel.

According to Tertullian (writing in about the year 200), early Christian women appealed to Thecla's example to defend women's freedom to teach and to baptize. A shrine to Thecla in Seleucia (Asia Minor) became a popular pilgrimage site in the fourth and fifth centuries. Devotion to Thecla from Gaul to Palestine is also evident in literature, art, and the practice of naming children after her. Her image appeared on wall paintings, clay flasks, oil lamps, stone reliefs, textile curtains, and other media.

Let us Pray: God of liberating power, you raised up your apostle Thecla, who allowed no obstacle or peril to inhibit her from bearing witness to new life in Jesus Christ: Empower courageous evangelists among us, that men and women everywhere may experience the freedom you offer; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**