

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, September 08, 2019

The Collect: Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Track 1 Old Testament: Jeremiah 18:1-11 read from the New Century Version Bible

18 This is the word the Lord spoke to Jeremiah: 2 “Go down to the potter’s house, and I will give you my message there.” 3 So I went down to the potter’s house and saw him working at the potter’s wheel. 4 He was using his hands to make a pot from clay, but something went wrong with it. So he used that clay to make another pot the way he wanted it to be.

5 Then the Lord spoke his word to me: 6 “Family of Israel, can’t I do the same thing with you?” says the Lord. “You are in my hands like the clay in the potter’s hands. 7 There may come a time when I will speak about a nation or a kingdom that I will pull up by its roots or that I will pull down to destroy it. 8 But if the people of that nation stop doing the evil they have done, I will change my mind and not carry out my plans to bring disaster to them. 9 There may come another time when I will speak about a nation that I will build up and plant. 10 But if I see it doing evil by not obeying me, I will change my mind and not carry out my plans to do good for them.

11 “So, say this to the people of Judah and those who live in Jerusalem: ‘This is what the Lord says: I am preparing disaster for you and making plans against you. So stop doing evil. Change your ways and do what is right.’

The Word of the Lord

Track 2 Old Testament: Deuteronomy 30:15-20 read from the New Century Version Bible

15 Look, today I offer you life and success, death and destruction. 16 I command you today to love the Lord your God, to do what he wants you to do, and to keep his commands, his rules, and his laws. Then you will live and grow in number, and the Lord your God will bless

you in the land you are entering to take as your own.

17 But if you turn away from the Lord and do not obey him, if you are led to bow and serve other gods, 18 I tell you today that you will surely be destroyed. And you will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan River to enter and take as your own.

19 Today I ask heaven and earth to be witnesses. I am offering you life or death, blessings or curses. Now, choose life! Then you and your children may live. 20 To choose life is to love the Lord your God, obey him, and stay close to him. He is your life, and he will let you live many years in the land, the land he promised to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Word of the Lord

Track 1 Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 Lord, you have searched me out and known me; *
 you know my sitting down and my rising up;
 you discern my thoughts from afar.

2 You trace my journeys and my resting-places *
 and are acquainted with all my ways.

3 Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, *
 but you, O Lord, know it altogether.

4 You press upon me behind and before *
 and lay your hand upon me.

5 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; *
 it is so high that I cannot attain to it.

12 For you yourself created my inmost parts; *
 you knit me together in my mother's womb.

13 I will thank you because I am marvelously made; *
 your works are wonderful, and I know it well.

14 My body was not hidden from you, *
 while I was being made in secret
 and woven in the depths of the earth.

15 Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb;
all of them were written in your book; *
they were fashioned day by day,
when as yet there was none of them.

16 How deep I find your thoughts, O God! *
how great is the sum of them!

17 If I were to count them, they would be more in number
than the sand; *
to count them all, my life span would need to
be like yours.

Track 2 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.

Epistle: Philemon 1-21 read from the New International Version Bible

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker— 2 also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home:

3 Grace and peace to you[a] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, 5 because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. 6 I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. 7 Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

8 Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, 9 yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— 10 that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, [b] who became my son while I was in chains. 11 Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

12 I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. 13 I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. 14 But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. 15 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— 16 no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

17 So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18 If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. 19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. 20 I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33 read from the New Living Translation Bible

25 A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, 26 “If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. 27 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. 28 “But don’t begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? 29 Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. 30 They would say, ‘There’s the person who started that building and couldn’t afford to finish it!’

31 “Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? 32 And if he can’t, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. 33 So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On September 9th we remember Constance, Nun, and Her Companions. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

In August, 1878, yellow fever invaded the city of Memphis, Tennessee, for the third time in ten years. By the month’s end, the disease had become epidemic and a quarantine was ordered. While more than 25,000 citizens had fled in terror, nearly 20,000 more remained to face the pestilence. As cases multiplied, death tolls averaged 200 daily. When the worst was over, ninety percent of the people who remained had contracted the fever; more than 5,000 people had died.

In that time of panic and flight, many brave men and women, both lay and ordained, remained at their posts of duty or came as volunteers to assist despite the terrible risk. Notable among these heroes were Constance, Superior of the Sisters of St. Mary in Memphis, and her Companions. The Sisters had come to Memphis in 1873, at Bishop

Quintard's request, to found a girls' school adjacent to St. Mary's Cathedral. When the 1878 epidemic began, George C. Harris, the Cathedral Dean, and Sister Constance immediately organized relief work among the stricken. Helping were six of Constance's fellow Sisters of St. Mary; Sister Clare from St. Margaret's House, Boston, Massachusetts; the Reverend Charles C. Parsons, Rector of Grace and St. Lazarus Church, Memphis; and the Reverend Louis S. Schuyler, assistant at Holy Innocents, Hoboken, New Jersey. The Cathedral group also included three physicians, two of whom were ordained Episcopal priests, the Sisters' two matrons, and several volunteer nurses from New York. They have ever since been known as "The Martyrs of Memphis," as have those of other Communion who ministered in Christ's name during this time of desolation.

The Cathedral buildings were located in the most infected region of Memphis. Here, amid sweltering heat and scenes of indescribable horror, these men and women of God gave relief to the sick, comfort to the dying, and homes to the many orphaned children. Only two of the workers escaped the fever. Among those who died were Constance, Thecla, Ruth, and Frances, and the Reverend Charles Parsons and the Reverend Louis Schuyler. The six martyred Sisters and priests are buried at Elmwood Cemetery. The monument marking the joint grave of Fathers Parsons and Schuyler bears the inscription: "Greater Love Hath No Man." The beautiful High Altar in St. Mary's Cathedral, Memphis, is a memorial to the four Sisters.

Let Us Pray: We give you thanks and praise, O God of compassion, for the heroic witness of Constance and her companions, who, in a time of plague and pestilence, were steadfast in their care for the sick and dying, and loved not their own lives, even unto death; Inspire in us a like love and commitment to those in need, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**