

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Sunday, February 07, 2021

The Collect: Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Old Testament: Isaiah 40:21-31 read from the World English Bible

21 Haven't you known?

Haven't you heard?

Haven't you been told from the beginning?

Haven't you understood from the foundations of the earth?

22 It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,

and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;

who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,

and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in,

23 who brings princes to nothing,

who makes the judges of the earth meaningless.

24 They are planted scarcely.

They are sown scarcely.

Their stock has scarcely taken root in the ground.

He merely blows on them, and they wither,

and the whirlwind takes them away as stubble.

25 "To whom then will you liken me?

Who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes on high,

and see who has created these,

who brings out their army by number.

He calls them all by name.

by the greatness of his might,
and because he is strong in power,
not one is lacking.

27 Why do you say, Jacob,
and speak, Israel,
“My way is hidden from Yahweh,
and the justice due me is disregarded by my God?”

28 Haven't you known?

Haven't you heard?

The everlasting God, Yahweh,
the Creator of the ends of the earth, doesn't faint.

He isn't weary.

His understanding is unsearchable.

29 He gives power to the weak.

He increases the strength of him who has no might.

30 Even the youths faint and get weary,
and the young men utterly fall;

31 but those who wait for Yahweh will renew their strength.

They will mount up with wings like eagles.

They will run, and not be weary.

They will walk, and not faint.

Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people

Psalm 147:1-12, 21c read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 Hallelujah!

How good it is to sing praises to our God! *

how pleasant it is to honor him with praise!

2 The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem; *

he gathers the exiles of Israel.

3 He heals the brokenhearted *

and binds up their wounds.

4 He counts the number of the stars *

and calls them all by their names.

5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; *

there is no limit to his wisdom.

6 The Lord lifts up the lowly, *

but casts the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; *

make music to our God upon the harp.

8 He covers the heavens with clouds *

and prepares rain for the earth;

9 He makes grass to grow upon the mountains *

and green plants to serve mankind.

10 He provides food for flocks and herds *

and for the young ravens when they cry.

11 He is not impressed by the might of a horse; *

he has no pleasure in the strength of a man;

12 But the Lord has pleasure in those who fear him, *

in those who await his gracious favor.

21 Hallelujah!

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 read from the Revised Standard Version Bible

16 For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. 18 What then is my reward? Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel.

19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win

those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: Mark 1:29-39 read from the Amplified Bible

29 And immediately they left the synagogue and went into the house of Simon [Peter] and Andrew, accompanied by James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they told Him about her. 31 Jesus went to her, and taking her by the hand, raised her up; and the fever left her, and she began to serve them [as her guests].

32 Now when evening came, after the sun had set [and the Sabbath Day had ended, in a steady stream] they were bringing to Him all who were sick and those who were under the power of demons, 33 until the whole city had gathered together at the door. 34 And Jesus healed many who were suffering with various diseases; and He drove out many demons, but would not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him [recognizing Him as the Son of God].

35 Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left [the house], and went out to a secluded place, and was praying there. 36 Simon [Peter] and his companions searched [everywhere, looking anxiously] for Him, 37 and they found Him and said, "Everybody is looking for You!" 38 He replied, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so I may preach there also; that is why I came [from the Father]." 39 So He went throughout Galilee, preaching [the gospel] in their synagogues and casting out demons.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On February 11 we celebrate the life of Frances Jane (Fanny) Van Alstyne Crosby. Hymnwriter. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

Crosby, a lifelong Methodist, was the most prolific writer of hymn texts and gospel songs in the American evangelical tradition of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She wrote more than eight thousand sacred texts in addition to other poetry.

Frances Jane Crosby was born in Putnam County, New York, on March 24, 1820. Although not born blind, she lost her sight as an infant as a result of complications from a childhood illness. At the age of fifteen, she entered the New York Institute for the Blind, where she would later teach for a number of years. In 1858, she married Alexander van Alstyne, a musician in New York who was also blind.

Crosby's texts were so popular that nearly every well-known composer of gospel music of the period came to her for words to accompany their melodies. In most hymn writing, the words come first and then a composer sets them to music, but for Crosby the words came so quickly and naturally that composers would often take her their tunes and she would immediately begin to shape words that fit the music.

Perhaps the best example of this process led to the creation of Crosby's most well known hymn "Blessed assurance." On a visit to the home of a friend, the composer Phoebe Knapp, a newly composed tune was played for Crosby. After listening to the tune several times, the text began to take shape, and in a very short time one of the world's most popular gospel hymns was born.

The American gospel song is a unique genre of sacred music that combines words expressive of personal faith and witness with tunes that are simple and easily learned. Fanny Crosby's contribution to this genre is unequalled. Dozens of her hymns continue to find a place in the hymnals of Protestant evangelicalism around the world.

Fanny Crosby died on February 12, 1915, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where she is buried.

Let us pray: O God, the blessed assurance of all who trust in you: We give you thanks for

your servant Fanny Crosby, and pray that we, inspired by her words and example, may rejoice to sing ever of your love, praising our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**