

Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 21

The Collect: Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Jeremiah 31:31-34 read from New Revised Standard Version

Anglicized

31 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord’, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people

Psalm 51:1-13 or Psalm 119:9 – 16 both will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; *

in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness *

and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions, *

and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against you only have I sinned *

and done what is evil in your sight.

5 And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.

6 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.

7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

8 Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.

9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

10 Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.

11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.

12 Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.

13 Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Or

Psalm 119:9-16 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

9 How shall a young man cleanse his way? *
By keeping to your words.

10 With my whole heart I seek you; *
let me not stray from your commandments.

11 I treasure your promise in my heart, *
that I may not sin against you.

12 Blessed are you, O Lord; *
instruct me in your statutes.

13 With my lips will I recite *
all the judgments of your mouth.

14 I have taken greater delight in the way of your decrees *
than in all manner of riches.

15 I will meditate on your commandments *
and give attention to your ways.

16 My delight is in your statutes; *
I will not forget your word.

Epistle: Hebrews 5:5-10 read from the World English Bible

5 So also Christ didn't glorify himself to be made a high priest, but it was he who said to him,

"You are my Son. Today I have become your father."

6 As he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

7 He, in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and petitions with strong crying and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, 8 though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered. 9 Having been made perfect, he became to all of those who obey him the author of eternal salvation, 10 named by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: John 12:20-33 read from the Revised Standard Version Bible

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. 21 So these came to Philip, who was from Beth-sa'ida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew went with Philip and they told Jesus.

23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified.

24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If any one serves me, he must follow me;

and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him.

27 “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify thy name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd standing by heard it and said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” 30 Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; 32 and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” 33 He said this to show by what death he was to die.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On March 26 we celebrate the life of Richard Allen, First Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

Richard Allen was born into slavery in 1760 in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Allen, his parents, and his siblings were eventually sold to owner Stokely Sturgis, whose plantation was in Delaware. The Methodists were already active in Delaware, and Sturgis allowed Allen to attend church. At the age of 17, Richard underwent a classic conversion experience: “I cried to the Lord both day and night,” Allen said. “All of a sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and, glory to God, I cried.”

Allen brought members of the Methodist Church into his master’s home, where Sturgis heard a sermon by the great Methodist preacher Freeborn Garrettson. Sturgis was himself converted, and he allowed Allen to hire himself out and purchase his freedom; five years later, Richard Allen was a free man.

In 1786, Allen became a preacher at St. George’s Methodist Church, but he was restricted to preaching at early morning services. Eventually, as black membership increased, the vestry decided to build a segregated section for black worshippers. Allen, along with his friend Absalom Jones, resented the segregation of his fellow black Christians and, in 1787, Allen and Jones led black worshippers out of St. George’s in protest.

While Jones and many of those associated with him joined The Episcopal Church, Allen chose to continue in his Methodist tradition. He had been cooperating with Bishop Francis Asbury to spread Methodism among African Americans, and, in 1794, he founded Bethel Church in Philadelphia. When the newly formed African Methodist Episcopal Church declared its independence, Allen became its first Bishop.

Throughout his life, Richard Allen remained an advocate of freedom for all people, even operating a station on the Underground Railroad for escaped slaves. His ardent belief in the brotherhood of all who belonged to Christ is best expressed in one of the many hymns he wrote:

Why do they then appear so mean
And why so much despised?
Because of their rich robes unseen
The world is not appriz'd.

Allen died in 1831.

Let us pray: Loving God, who makes us all your children by adoption in Jesus Christ: May we, following the example of your servant Richard Allen, proclaim liberty to all who are enslaved and captive in this world; through Jesus Christ, Savior of all, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**