

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, August 7

The Collect: Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live according to your will; 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: Isaiah 1:1, 10-20 read from the Easy to Read Version Bible

1 This is the vision of Isaiah son of Amoz. God showed Isaiah what would happen to Judah and Jerusalem. Isaiah saw this during the time when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah.

10 You officers of Sodom, listen to the Lord's message. You people of Gomorrah, listen to God's teaching. 11 The Lord says, "Why do you continue giving me all these sacrifices? I have had enough of your sacrifices of rams and the fat from well-fed animals. I don't want the blood of those bulls, sheep, and goats. 12 When you people come to meet with me, you trample everything in my yard. Who told you to do this?

13 "Don't keep bringing me those worthless sacrifices. I hate the incense you give me. I cannot stand your festivals for the New Moon, the Sabbath, and other special meeting days. I hate the evil you do during those holy times together. 14 I hate your monthly meetings and councils. They have become like heavy weights to me, and I am tired of carrying them.

15 "When you raise your arms to pray to me, I will refuse to look at you. You will say more and more prayers, but I will refuse to listen because your hands are covered with blood.

16 "Wash yourselves and make yourselves clean. Stop doing the evil things I see you do. Stop doing wrong. 17 Learn to do good. Treat people fairly. Punish those who hurt others. Speak up for the widows and orphans. Argue their cases for them in court.

18 "I, the Lord, am the one speaking to you. Come, let's discuss this. Even if your sins are

as dark as red dye, that stain can be removed and you will be as pure as wool that is as white as snow.

19 “If you listen to what I say, you will get the good things from this land. 20 But if you refuse to listen and rebel against me, your enemies will destroy you.”

The Lord himself said this.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Track 1 Psalm 50:1-8, 23-24 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 The Lord, the God of gods, has spoken; *

he has called the earth from the rising of the sun to
its setting.

2 Out of Zion, perfect in its beauty, *

God reveals himself in glory.

3 Our God will come and will not keep silence; *

before him there is a consuming flame,
and round about him a raging storm.

4 He calls the heavens and the earth from above *

to witness the judgment of his people.

5 “Gather before me my loyal followers, *

those who have made a covenant with me
and sealed it with sacrifice.”

6 Let the heavens declare the rightness of his cause; *

for God himself is judge.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak:

“O Israel, I will bear witness against you; *
for I am God, your God.

8 I do not accuse you because of your sacrifices; *

your offerings are always before me.

23 Consider this well, you who forget God, *

lest I rend you and there be none to deliver you.

24 Whoever offers me the sacrifice of thanksgiving
honors me; *
but to those who keep in my way will I show
the salvation of God.”

Track 2 Old Testament: Genesis 15:1-6 read from the Easy to Read Version Bible

15 After all these things happened, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. God said, “Abram, don’t be afraid. I will defend you and give you a great reward.”

2 But Abram said, “Lord God, there is nothing you can give me that will make me happy, because I have no son. My slave Eliezer from Damascus will get everything I own after I die.” 3 Abram said, “You have given me no son, so a slave born in my house will get everything I have.”

4 Then the Lord spoke to Abram and said, “That slave will not be the one to get what you have. You will have a son who will get everything you own.”

5 Then God led Abram outside and said, “Look at the sky. See the many stars. There are so many you cannot count them. Your family will be like that.”

6 Abram believed the Lord, and because of this faith the Lord accepted him as one who has done what is right. 7 He said to Abram, “I am the Lord who led you from Ur of Babylonia. I did this so that I could give you this land. You will own this land.”

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Track 2 Psalm 33:12-22 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

12 Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord! *
happy the people he has chosen to be his own!

13 The Lord looks down from heaven, *
and beholds all the people in the world.

14 From where he sits enthroned he turns his gaze *
on all who dwell on the earth.

15 He fashions all the hearts of them *
and understands all their works.

16 There is no king that can be saved by a mighty army;
a strong man is not delivered by his great strength.

17 The horse is a vain hope for deliverance; *
for all its strength it cannot save.

18 Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear him, *
on those who wait upon his love,

19 To pluck their lives from death, *
and to feed them in time of famine.

20 Our soul waits for the Lord; *
he is our help and our shield.

21 Indeed, our heart rejoices in him, *
for in his holy Name we put our trust.

22 Let your loving-kindness, O Lord, be upon us, *
as we have put our trust in you.

Epistle: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 read from the Revised Standard Version Bible

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old received divine approval. 3 By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

13 These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and

greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: Luke 12:32-40 read from the Amplified Bible

32 Do not be afraid and anxious, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

33 "Sell your possessions (show compassion) and give [donations] to the poor. Provide money belts for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing and inexhaustible treasure in the heavens, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

35 "Be dressed and ready for active service, and keep your lamps continuously burning. 36 Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that when he comes and knocks they may immediately open the door for him. 37 Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) are those servants whom the master finds awake and watching when he arrives. I assure you and most solemnly say to you, he will prepare himself to serve, and will have them recline at the table, and will come and wait on them. 38 Whether he comes in the second watch (before midnight), or even in the third (after midnight), and finds them so [prepared and ready], blessed are those servants.

39 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time the thief was coming, he [would have been awake and alert, and] would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 40 You too, be continually ready; because the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

The Gospel of the Lord

On August 13 we celebrate the life of Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

Jeremy Taylor, one of the most influential of the “Caroline Divines,” was educated at Cambridge and, through the influence of William Laud, became a Fellow of All Souls at Oxford. He was still quite young when he became chaplain to Charles I and, later, during the Civil War, a chaplain in the Royalist army.

The successes of Cromwell’s forces brought about Taylor’s imprisonment and, after Cromwell’s victory, Taylor spent several years in forced retirement as chaplain to the family of Lord Carberry in Wales. It was during this time that his most influential works were written, especially *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* (1651).

Among his other works, *Liberty of Prophesying* proved to be a seminal work in encouraging the development of religious toleration in the seventeenth century. The principles set forth in that book rank with those of Milton’s *Areopagitica* in its plea for freedom of thought.

Despite Taylor’s unquestioned literary genius, he was, unfortunately, not asked to have a part in the Prayer Book revision of 1662. The first American Prayer Book, however, incorporated one of his prayers, part of which has been adapted to serve as the Collect of his commemoration; and another has been added in the present Prayer Book.

Taylor’s theology has sometimes been criticized, most bitinglly by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who claimed that Taylor seems to “present our own holy life as the grounds of our religious hope, rather than as the fruit of that hope, whose ground is the mercies of Christ.” No such complaint, however, was ever made about his prayers, which exemplify the best of Caroline divinity, blended with great literary genius.

In later life, Taylor and his family moved to the northeastern part of Ireland where, after the restoration of the monarchy, he became Bishop of Down and Connor. To this was later added the small adjacent diocese of Dromore. As Bishop, he labored tirelessly to rebuild churches, restore the use of the Prayer Book, and overcome continuing Puritan opposition.

As Vice-chancellor of Trinity College, Dublin, he took a leading part in reviving the intellectual life of the Church of Ireland. He remained to the end a man of prayer and a pastor.

Let us pray: O God, whose days are without end, and whose mercies cannot be numbered: Make us, like your servant Jeremy Taylor, deeply aware of the shortness and uncertainty of human life; and let your Holy Spirit lead us in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**