

Psalm and Readings Thursday 16th May 2024

Psalm 24

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.
They will receive blessing from the Lord,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.
Such is the company of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is the King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory.

Numbers 24

Now Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, so he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face towards the wilderness. Balaam looked up and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. Then the spirit of God came upon him, and he uttered his oracle, saying:

'The oracle of Balaam son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is clear,
the oracle of one who hears the words of God,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,
who falls down, but with eyes uncovered:
how fair are your tents, O Jacob,
your encampments, O Israel!
Like palm groves that stretch far away,
like gardens beside a river,
like aloes that the Lord has planted,
like cedar trees beside the waters.

Water shall flow from his buckets,
and his seed shall have abundant water,
his king shall be higher than Agag,
and his kingdom shall be exalted.
God, who brings him out of Egypt,
is like the horns of a wild ox for him;
he shall devour the nations that are his foes
and break their bones.
He shall strike with his arrows.
He crouched, he lay down like a lion,
and like a lioness; who will rouse him up?
Blessed is everyone who blesses you,
and cursed is everyone who curses you.'

Then Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together. Balak said to Balaam, 'I summoned you to curse my enemies, but instead you have blessed them these three times. Now be off with you! Go home! I said, "I will reward you richly", but the Lord has denied you any reward.' And Balaam said to Balak, 'Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, "If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own will; what the Lord says, that is what I will say"? So now, I am going to my people; let me advise you what this people will do to your people in days to come.'

So he uttered his oracle, saying:
'The oracle of Balaam son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is clear,
the oracle of one who hears the words of God,
and knows the knowledge of the Most High,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,
who falls down, but with his eyes uncovered:
I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near—
a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the borderlands of Moab,
and the territory of all the Shethites.
Edom will become a possession,
Seir a possession of its enemies,
while Israel does valiantly.
One out of Jacob shall rule,
and destroy the survivors of Ir.'

Then he looked on Amalek, and uttered his oracle, saying:

'First among the nations was Amalek,
but its end is to perish for ever.'

Then he looked on the Kenite, and uttered his oracle, saying:

'Enduring is your dwelling-place,
and your nest is set in the rock;
yet Kain is destined for burning.
How long shall Asshur take you away captive?'

Again he uttered his oracle, saying:

'Alas, who shall live when God does this?
But ships shall come from Kittim
and shall afflict Asshur and Eber;
and he also shall perish for ever.'

Then Balaam got up and went back to his place,
and Balak also went his way.

Luke 8:26-39

Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me' — for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) Jesus then asked him, 'What is your name?' He said, 'Legion'; for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they

found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

A prayer for this time of transition

Faithful and loving God
we hold our Benefice before you in this time of transition.
Be with us in our waiting, in our expectation and in our preparation.
Be with our new incumbent as he or she also waits, expects and prepares.
Bring us together in love for you and for this Benefice,
and be our light for the way ahead.
In Jesus' name,
Amen

The Collect of the Day

O God the King of glory,
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ
is gone before,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen