

Psalm and Readings Thursday 19th September 2024

Psalm 56

Be gracious to me, O God, for people trample on me;

all day long foes oppress me;
my enemies trample on me all day long,
for many fight against me.

O Most High, when I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.

In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I am not afraid;
what can flesh do to me?

All day long they seek to injure my cause;
all their thoughts are against me for evil.

They stir up strife, they lurk,
they watch my steps.

As they hoped to have my life,
so repay them for their crime;
in wrath cast down the peoples, O God!

You have kept count of my tossings;
put my tears in your bottle.

Are they not in your record?

Then my enemies will retreat
on the day when I call.

This I know, that God is for me.

In God, whose word I praise,
in the Lord, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I am not afraid.

What can a mere mortal do to me?

My vows to you I must perform, O God;
I will render thank-offerings to you.

For you have delivered my soul from death,
and my feet from falling,
so that I may walk before God
in the light of life.

1 Kings 18:1-20

After many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year of the drought, saying, 'Go, present yourself to Ahab; I will send rain on the earth.' So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. The famine was severe in Samaria. Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace. (Now Obadiah revered the Lord greatly; when Jezebel was killing off the prophets of the

Lord, Obadiah took a hundred prophets, hid them fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water.) Then Ahab said to Obadiah, 'Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the wadis; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals.' So they divided the land between them to pass through it; Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself.

As Obadiah was on the way, Elijah met him; Obadiah recognized him, fell on his face, and said, 'Is it you, my lord Elijah?' He answered him, 'It is I. Go, tell your lord that Elijah is here.' And he said, 'How have I sinned, that you would hand your servant over to Ahab, to kill me? As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom to which my lord has not sent to seek you; and when they would say, "He is not here", he would require an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you. But now you say, "Go, tell your lord that Elijah is here." As soon as I have gone from you, the spirit of the Lord will carry you I know not where; so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have revered the Lord from my youth. Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred of the Lord's prophets fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water? Yet now you say, "Go, tell your lord that Elijah is here"; he will surely kill me.' Elijah said, 'As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today.' So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, 'Is it you, you troubler of Israel?' He answered, 'I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals. Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.'

So Ahab sent to all the Israelites, and assembled the prophets at Mount Carmel.

Acts 20:17-end

From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. When they came to him, he said to them:

'You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears, enduring the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house, as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus. And now, as a captive to the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me. But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace.

'And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again. Therefore I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing. You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

When he had finished speaking, he knelt down with them all and prayed. There was much weeping among them all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, grieving especially because of what he had said, that they would not see him again. Then they brought him to the ship.

The Collect of the Day

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers

of your people who call upon you;
and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to
fulfil them;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

A prayer for this time of transition

Faithful and loving God
we hold our Benefice before you in this time of
uncertainty.
Be with us in our waiting, in our expectation and
in our preparation as we seek our new
Incumbent.
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