

Psalm and Readings Wednesday 6th July 2022

Psalm 77

I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, that he may hear me.
In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
in the night my hand is stretched out without
wearying;
my soul refuses to be comforted.
I think of God, and I moan;
I meditate, and my spirit faints.

You keep my eyelids from closing;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
I consider the days of old,
and remember the years of long ago.
I commune with my heart in the night;
I meditate and search my spirit:
'Will the Lord spurn for ever,
and never again be favourable?
Has his steadfast love ceased for ever?
Are his promises at an end for all time?
Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?'
And I say, 'It is my grief
that the right hand of the Most High has
changed.'

I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;
I will remember your wonders of old.
I will meditate on all your work,
and muse on your mighty deeds.
Your way, O God, is holy.
What god is so great as our God?
You are the God who works wonders;
you have displayed your might among the
peoples.
With your strong arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

When the waters saw you, O God,
when the waters saw you, they were afraid;
the very deep trembled.
The clouds poured out water;
the skies thundered;
your arrows flashed on every side.
The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;
your lightnings lit up the world;

the earth trembled and shook.
Your way was through the sea,
your path, through the mighty waters;
yet your footprints were unseen.
You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Judges 9:22-end

Abimelech ruled over Israel for three years. But God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the lords of Shechem; and the lords of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech. This happened so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might be avenged and their blood be laid on their brother Abimelech, who killed them, and on the lords of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers. So, out of hostility to him, the lords of Shechem set ambushes on the mountain tops. They robbed all who passed by them along that way; and it was reported to Abimelech.

When Gaal son of Ebed moved into Shechem with his kinsfolk, the lords of Shechem put confidence in him. They went out into the field and gathered the grapes from their vineyards, trod them, and celebrated. Then they went into the temple of their god, ate and drank, and ridiculed Abimelech. Gaal son of Ebed said, 'Who is Abimelech, and who are we of Shechem, that we should serve him? Did not the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul his officer serve the men of Hamor father of Shechem? Why then should we serve him? If only this people were under my command! Then I would remove Abimelech; I would say to him, "Increase your army, and come out."'

When Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. He sent messengers to Abimelech at Arumah, saying, 'Look, Gaal son of Ebed and his kinsfolk have come to Shechem, and they are stirring up the city against you. Now therefore, go by night, you and the troops that are with you, and lie in wait in the fields. Then early in the morning, as soon as the sun rises, get up and rush on the city; and when he and the troops that are with him come

out against you, you may deal with them as best you can.'

So Abimelech and all the troops with him got up by night and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies. When Gaal son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city, Abimelech and the troops with him rose from the ambush. And when Gaal saw them, he said to Zebul, 'Look, people are coming down from the mountain tops!' And Zebul said to him, 'The shadows on the mountains look like people to you.' Gaal spoke again and said, 'Look, people are coming down from Tabbur-erez, and one company is coming from the direction of Elon-meonenim.' Then Zebul said to him, 'Where is your boast now, you who said, "Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?" Are not these the troops you made light of? Go out now and fight with them.' So Gaal went out at the head of the lords of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him. Many fell wounded, up to the entrance of the gate. So Abimelech resided at Arumah; and Zebul drove out Gaal and his kinsfolk, so that they could not live on at Shechem.

On the following day the people went out into the fields. When Abimelech was told, he took his troops and divided them into three companies, and lay in wait in the fields. When he looked and saw the people coming out of the city, he rose against them and killed them. Abimelech and the company that was with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city, while the two companies rushed on all who were in the fields and killed them. Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city, and killed the people that were in it; and he razed the city and sowed it with salt.

When all the lords of the Tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered the stronghold of the temple of El-berith. Abimelech was told that all the lords of the Tower of Shechem were gathered together. So Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the troops that were with him. Abimelech took an axe in his hand, cut down a bundle of brushwood, and took it up and laid it on his shoulder. Then he said to the troops with him, 'What you have seen me do, do quickly, as I have done.' So every one of the troops cut down a

bundle and following Abimelech put it against the stronghold, and they set the stronghold on fire over them, so that all the people of the Tower of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women.

Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. But there was a strong tower within the city, and all the men and women and all the lords of the city fled to it and shut themselves in; and they went to the roof of the tower. Abimelech came to the tower, and fought against it, and came near to the entrance of the tower to burn it with fire. But a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head, and crushed his skull. Immediately he called to the young man who carried his armour and said to him, 'Draw your sword and kill me, so people will not say about me, "A woman killed him."' So the young man thrust him through, and he died. When the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they all went home. Thus God repaid Abimelech for the crime he committed against his father in killing his seventy brothers; and God also made all the wickedness of the people of Shechem fall back on their heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham son of Jerubbaal.

Luke 16:1-18

Then Jesus said to the disciples, 'There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, "What is this that I hear about you? Give me an account of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer." Then the manager said to himself, "What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes." So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, "How much do you owe my master?" He answered, "A hundred jugs of olive oil." He said to him, "Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty." Then he asked another, "And how much do you owe?" He replied, "A hundred containers of wheat." He said to him, "Take your bill and make it eighty." And his master commended the dishonest manager

because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

‘Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.’

The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. So he said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God.’

‘The law and the prophets were in effect until John came; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped.

‘Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.’