

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year A

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1

Isaiah 58:7-10

Thus says the LORD:
Share your bread with the hungry,
shelter the oppressed and the homeless;
clothe the naked when you see them,
and do not turn your back on your own.
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your wound shall quickly be healed;
your vindication shall go before you,
and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer,
you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!
If you remove from your midst
oppression, false accusation and malicious speech;
if you bestow your bread on the hungry
and satisfy the afflicted;
then light shall rise for you in the darkness,
and the gloom shall become for you like midday.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R. (4a) **The just man is a light in darkness to the upright.** or: R. **Alleluia.**

Light shines through the darkness for the upright;
he is gracious and merciful and just.

Well for the man who is gracious and lends,
who conducts his affairs with justice.

R. **The just man is a light in darkness to the upright.**

He shall never be moved;
the just one shall be in everlasting remembrance.

An evil report he shall not fear;
his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.

R. **The just man is a light in darkness to the upright.**

His heart is steadfast; he shall not fear.

Lavishly he gives to the poor;
His justice shall endure forever;
his horn shall be exalted in glory.

R. **The just man is a light in darkness to the upright.**

Reading 2

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

When I came to you, brothers and sisters,
proclaiming the mystery of God,
I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom.
For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you
except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.
I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling,
and my message and my proclamation
were not with persuasive words of wisdom,
but with a demonstration of Spirit and power,
so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom
but on the power of God.

Alleluia

John 8:12

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will have the light of life.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus said to his disciples:
"You are the salt of the earth.
But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?
It is no longer good for anything
but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.
You are the light of the world.
A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.
Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket;
it is set on a lampstand,
where it gives light to all in the house.
Just so, your light must shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds
and glorify your heavenly Father."

Exegesis

Isaiah 58:7-10

Our pericope is taken from what Scholars have come to call *Trito-Isaiah* or *Third-Isaiah*, which includes chapters 56 through 66. Isaiah begins with events prior to the Exile, *Second-Isaiah*, chapters 40 through 55, deal with events during the time of the Exile. The setting of this final section of Isaiah is back in Jerusalem immediately following the Exile, referred to as the *Restoration Period*.

Third-Isaiah compares the events of the delivery of the people from captivity in Babylon to the Exodus experience. Like the Exodus, freedom from Babylon marked the start of the journey to the Promised Land. The first events involve the long sojourn through the desert to settle the land. The second “Exodus” also begins with a journey, this time to reclaim and rebuild the temple, their rituals, the city and their lives. As they return to Jerusalem, they find their city burned and the temple destroyed. It must have been demoralizing to see the daunting task of rebuilding all that lay before them.

Throughout their years of bondage in Babylon, however, *Deutero-Isaiah*, repeatedly called on the people to rejoice with a lively hope that God would rescue them as He once did in Egypt. With their new freedom, *Trito-Isaiah* continually calls on the people to rejoice. “All who keep the sabbath free from profanation and hold to My covenant, them I will bring to My holy mountain and make joyful in My house of prayer.” (Is 56: 6-7). “They shall have a double inheritance in their land, everlasting joy shall be theirs.” (Is 61: 7). “I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul.” (Is 61: 10). “Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; ... For I create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight.” (Is 65: 17-18).

Experts date our pericope from the 58th Chapter of Tri-Isa before the reconstruction of the city walls of Jerusalem in 445 and perhaps even before the dedication of the rebuilt temple in 515. Therefore, it was promulgated shortly after the return of the exiles from Babylon, during the early Restoration Period.

Our pericope is selected from a section in Tri-Isa that is titled *True Fasting* in the NAB. Fasting was a significant part of Jewish ritual that intensified during and after the Exile. Our selected passage is introduced by the prior verse. “This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke.” (Is 58: 6).

Thus says the LORD: Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. Certainly, the command to feed the hungry and shelter the oppressed is not a new concept for the Israelite People. “If a man is virtuous - ...if he oppresses no one, gives back the pledge received for a debt, commits no robbery; if he gives food to the hungry and clothes the naked; if he does not lend at interest nor exact usury; if he holds off from evildoing, judges fairly between a man and his opponent; if he lives by my statutes and is careful to observe my ordinances, that man is virtuous – he shall surely live, says the Lord God.” (Ez 18: 3, 7-9.) What is new, is its connection with fasting.

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. “For I shall restore you to health; of your wounds I will heal you, says the Lord.” (Jer 30: 17). “For the Lord comes before you, and your rear guard shall be the God of Israel.” (Is 52: 12b).

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am! The Hebrew word that is translated as *call* in this verse is *quarah*, which can also be translated as *shout*, *summon*, or *proclaim*. Both the words *call* and *cry* suggest a plea to the Lord in desperation.

If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; if you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday. *Proverbs* also warns against the sort of negative conduct mentioned here. “A scoundrel, a villain, is he who deals in crooked

Exegesis (Continued)

Isaiah 58:7-10

talk. He winks his eyes, shuffles his feet, makes signs with his fingers; he has perversity in his heart, is always plotting evil, sows discord.” (Prov 6: 12-14). Job’s “friend” Zophar the Naamathite, instructs him that if he removes this negative conduct from his life, “Then your life shall be brighter than the noonday; its gloom shall become like the morning.” (Job 11: 17).

Fasting in the Jewish tradition marked a time of mourning. During the Restoration Period days of fasting increased and the purpose of fasting evolved. During this period the Prophet Zechariah pleaded with the people to fast and beg for God’s mercy, as the restoration was not going as they had hoped. (See Zech 8:18). The society of justice, love and peace, and care for one’s neighbor was not being lived as it should. Our pericope from Tri-Isa is calling for this fast.

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Psalm 112 consists of ten verses and is titled *The Blessings of the Just* in the NAB. Psalm 112 is part of a group of psalms, psalms 112-117, that make up the *Hallel*, or *Hymns of Praise*, that are used in the Hebrew liturgy for great festivals. Psalm 112 is sung to begin the Paschal Meal. This psalm is an acrostic poem, each line beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Psalm 112 begins with the exultation, *Praise the Lord!* The Hebrew word that is translated as *praise* is *halleluiah*. Psalm 112 begins very similar to Psalm 1. The first two verses of Psalm 1 are as follows: “Blessed (ashre/makarios) are those who do not follow the counsel of the wicked, nor go the way of sinners, nor sit in the company of scoffers. Rather, the law of the Lord is their joy.” (Ps 1: 1-2).

The word *blessed* is a translation of the Hebrew word *ashre*. The LXX translates *ashre* as *makarios*. (See the exegesis from Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time for a discussion on *ashre/makarios*.) The psalm begins with a declaration of praise for the Lord. Then it moves to a series of beatitudes for those who live in right relationship with the Lord.

Light shines through the darkness for the upright; he is gracious and merciful and just. Well for the man who is gracious and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice. The Hebrew word that is translated as *upright* is *yashar*, which can also be translated as *straight, level, smooth, or true*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *gracious* is *hannun*. *Hannun* can also be translated as *kind or merciful*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *merciful* is *raham*, which can also be translated as *sympathetic or compassionate*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *righteous* is *saddique*. *Saddique* can also be translated as *just, innocent, upright, or devout*. When Zophar the Naamathite instructs Job to remove all iniquity and injustice from his life, he says, “Then your life shall be brighter than the noonday, its gloom shall become as the morning.” (Job 11: 17).

He shall never be moved; the just one shall be in everlasting remembrance. An evil report he shall not fear; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. This passage calls to mind two verses from *Proverbs*. “The memory of the just will be blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.” (Prov 10: 7). “But he who obeys Me dwells in security, in peace, without fear of harm.” (Prov 1: 33).

His heart is steadfast; he shall not fear. Lavishly he gives to the poor; His justice shall endure forever; his horn shall be exalted in glory. St. Paul quotes this passage in *Second Corinthians* when speaking of the cheerful giver. “‘He scatters abroad; He gives to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.’ The one who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness.” (2 Cor 9: 9-10).

Exegesis (Continued)

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

In the wealthy and diverse metropolis of Corinth, Paul introduced the Gospel. Paul established a community in Corinth in the year 51. “After this he (Paul) left Athens and went to Corinth.” (Acts 18: 1). “When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began to occupy himself totally with preaching the word, testifying to the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus.” (Acts 1: 5). “One night in a vision the Lord said to Paul, ‘Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you. No one will attack and harm you, for I have many people in the city.’ He settled there for a year and a half and taught the word of God among them.” (Acts 18: 9-11).

“But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews rose up against Paul and brought him to the tribunal.” (Acts 18: 12). We know from extra-biblical sources that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in the years 51 and 52. This information has helped scholars date the writings and travels of Paul. Paul penned this letter approximately five years later while in Ephesus. “I shall stay in Ephesus until Pentecost.” (1 Cor 16: 8). This stay in Ephesus occurred during his third missionary journey which spanned the years 53-58.

1 Corinthians begins with an introduction (vs. 1-3), follows with words of gratitude, a prayer of thanksgiving (vs. 4-9), and then Paul begins to address concerns that were brought to his attention relative to this community that he founded five years prior. In our pericope Paul continues to address those concerns.

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. Some manuscripts read testimony of God instead of mystery of God. The Greek word that is translated as testimony is martyrion. The Greek word that is translated as mystery is mysterion. Many scholars argue that martyrion is most likely true to the original text.² The original Greek that is translated in this verse as sublimity of words is hyperoche logos. Hyperoche can also be translated as superiority, authority, high sounding, or pompous. Paul in contrasting himself with the polished rhetoric of itinerate preachers and philosophers who attempted with their polish and charisma to persuade the crowds to follow them. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as wisdom is sophia. Paul is clearly referring to human wisdom here as opposed to Divine Wisdom, Sophia.

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Paul restates the focus of his ministry, the Cross of Christ, that he articulated earlier in his letter. “For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Cor 1: 22-24).

I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of Spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. The Greek word that is translated as fear in this verse is phobos. Phobos describes a deep craven fear, even terror and panic. The expression fear and trembling is common in Scripture as a reaction to the power and majesty of Almighty God, e.g., “When the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the trumpet blast and the mountain smoking, they all feared and trembled.” (Ex 20: 18). When contrasting the weakness of human wisdom with the power of God, Paul had already made that point earlier in the letter. “For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.” (1 Cor 1: 25). The Greek word that is translated as power in this verse is dynamis. Dynamis is a word that is often used to describe the power God, or the power of His Word, to effect reality. It can be used to describe power, might, strength, mighty deed and even miracles. The Greek word that is translated as Spirit is Pneuma, which in this context refers to the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit. Pneuma in its original meaning can be translated as spirit, breath or wind.

The power of God is the power of love. The Cross of Christ is the perfect and the ultimate expression of authentic self-giving love. The power of the Spirit is the power of love transforming hearts and souls of those who are open to receive God’s love.

Exegesis (Continued)

Matthew 5:13-16

Our pericope today is a continuation of the famous teaching of Jesus that we call the *Sermon on the Mountain*. Our selected passage immediately follows the *Beatitudes*. The *Beatitudes* call us to a higher level of being, living in God's love, dying to self in authentic love. Living this way makes us the salt of the earth and light to the nations.

Jesus said to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot." Salt was a common seasoning and preservative in biblical times as it is today. "Can a thing insipid be eaten without salt?" (Job 6: 6). Salt was used in ritual sacrifices that were part of the covenant with Aaron and his descendants. (See Num 18: 19). "However, every cereal offering that you present to the Lord shall be seasoned with salt. Do not let the salt of the covenant of your God be lacking from your cereal offering. On every offering you shall offer salt." (Lev 2: 13). Salt was also associated with the covenant that the Lord made with David and his descendants. "Do you not know that the Lord, the God of Israel, has given the kingdom of Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant made in salt?" (2 Chron 13: 5). "When you have finished the purification, bring an unblemished young bull and an unblemished ram from the flock, and present them before the Lord; the priests shall strew salt on them and offer them to the Lord as holocausts." (Ez 43: 23-24).

Jesus later used the image of salt as a symbol of the gift of peace that we are to share in our world. "Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if salt becomes insipid, with what will you restore its flavor? Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace with one another." (Mk 9: 49-50).

St. Paul uses the image of salt to describe the seasoning of our speech with God's love. "Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you know how you should respond to each one." (Col 4: 5-6).

You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father." Jesus is often portrayed in Matthew's Gospel as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. We as the Mystical Body of Christ are subsequently called to be that fulfillment. As the light of the world, we, the Mystical Body of Christ, are the fulfillment of the prophesy of Isaiah. "In days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it; many peoples shall come and say: 'Let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may instruct us in His ways, and we may walk in His paths. For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem... O house of Jacob come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.'" (Is 2: 2-3, 5). "I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations." (Is 42: 6). "It is too little, he says, for you to be My servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, to restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." (Is 49: 6).

The city on the Mountain is Jerusalem, but it is ultimately the Heavenly City of God. "No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem..." (Heb 12: 22). "I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev 21: 2).

Reflection

This past weekend, with His *Beatitudes*, Jesus gave us the formula for a happiness and joy that is beyond this world. God is the source of this heightened state of being. This experience of blessedness is available to every one of us. We all came from this state of happiness and our souls long to return to the state from which we came. It is the deepest longing of the human heart. Often as we go through life, we find ourselves living on the surface of life and never really get in touch with our deepest yearnings. As such, we try to feed this hunger with all the wrong things, things that ultimately don't satisfy our longings. We are always left unfulfilled.

This weekend's Gospel is a continuation of the famous teaching that we call *The Sermon on the Mountain* from Matthew's Gospel. The *Beatitudes* are merely the beginning of this great teaching. This is the first recorded teaching of Jesus as He begins His public life. Jesus goes quite literally right to the heart. He is telling us clearly that the deepest longing of our hearts for happiness can only be discovered in self-giving love. The great philosopher Aristotle taught that we would never find happiness if we went looking for it. The act of searching for happiness is self-serving and inward looking in and of itself. When we die to ourselves, we are able to connect with the ground of our being, the life-giving Spirit of God. There and only there is true happiness found.

In this continuation of the great sermon, Jesus is telling us that we must become like salt for the earth and a light for the nations. He is telling us that we must be like a city on a hilltop for all to see. These things are nothing onto themselves. They are there to serve a purpose for others. Salt is not a food in itself; it gives flavor to foods and acts as a preservative for foods. A city on a hill is there for all to see. It can be seen from a distance and offers guidance for travelers seeking their way through this life. Jesus is telling us that our purpose is to be salt and light for the benefit and guidance of others. He is reminding us of our mission as His followers.

We live in a world today that seems to have lost its way. People are searching for meaning and purpose, for hope and for happiness. Perhaps if we would listen to Jesus and seek the fulfillment that He is offering us, we would discover true and lasting happiness. Fulfillment comes from discovering and living our purpose, to be salt and light for the world, to be instruments and channels of God's love and peace. In doing so we discover our true selves as God's beloved children.

Yours in Christ,



Personal Witness

Our first reading today from *Third-Isaiah* reveals a shift in Jewish thought relative to fasting. For centuries in Jewish practice, fasting was a part of the mourning process. Eventually it evolved a bit to become more of a ritual focused on repentance. The people of Nineveh were asked to repent and so “they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.” (Jon 3: 5). Now, early in the Restoration Period, God challenges the people through the prophet, to refocus the intentions of their fasting. “This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.” (Is 58: 6-7).

Fasting has never been one of my charisms. I was born with an almost insatiable appetite for food. My mother tells me that I was a two-bottle baby from my earliest days. Most children’s first words are either “mama” or “dada.” My mother tells me that I did not have a first word. She said my first words were actually a complete sentence. In fact, she tells me that I quoted a line from Sacred Scripture, even the exact words of the Risen Lord: “Have you anything here to eat?” (Lk 24: 41). Actually, my first spoken word was “bubba” as I was calling for my bottle.

As you might surmise, Lent was a particularly difficult time for me as a child. We were always expected to give up something of significance for forty days and forty nights. Try as I may to give up something I didn’t like, my mother was far too savvy to fall for that. She would typically impose a fast from one of my favorite brands of candy or junk food. “Please, Lord, not potato chips!”

In 6th grade one of the girls in my class decided that we should do something for Lent as a group. Her and some of her brainiac friends decided that we should give up our lunch on Fridays and pool our lunch money to give to the poor. Naturally, I objected vehemently, I noted that I would contribute, but certainly not give up my lunch of fish sticks and French fries. I was shamed and voted down, and so I went along, with a bad attitude.

On the first Friday after Easter, we went on a field trip as a class and presented the local food pantry with a check for \$600. In addition, we each brought a canned-good from home to donate. We even got our picture in the local newspaper! To this day, that is one of my fondest memories of my grammar school years. It gave me an entirely different view of fasting, the fasting that God desires. We also brought a little light into the world for all to see. And my donation was a container of Morton salt.

