

DEVOTION FOR THE FIFTH MONDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PSALM 126

When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed.

Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with shouts of joy.

Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.”

The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen

Old Testament Reading: Deuteronomy 11:1-32 *Love the Lord by keeping His commands*

New Testament Reading: Acts 22:30-23:35 *Paul addresses the Sanhedrin*

“NOT PEACE BUT A SWORD”

Controversy followed Paul wherever he went (those who disliked him said he brought it with him). One of the most serious charges lodged against Paul was that he was a disturber of the peace; an agitator who encouraged factionalism and inspired sectarian violence. This charge was laid against Paul in particular and against Christians in general, by both the Jewish and Gentile authorities in the second half of the first century.

The Romans took trouble making seriously, responded to it quickly and ruthlessly. A riot about Christ amongst Jews in Rome, resulted in the expulsion of many Jews from the city, by the Emperor Claudius. In Ephesus, the town clerk dispersed an assembly which had gathered to protest the affront Christianity posed to their goddess Artemis, with the warning that they were liable to be charged with riot. The Romans took peace seriously and were determined to have it, even if it was enforced with a sword.

Paul was considered a disturber of the peace because, he proclaimed Jesus as the Prince of Peace. The peace of the gospel that Paul preached was the reconciliation of the human soul to God through faith in Jesus. The peace of the gospel provoked controversy, caused riot and led to division. It was as Jesus said, “*Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.*”

I wonder if Paul ever longed for peace and quiet. I wonder if he ever felt tempted to return to his trade as a tent maker and to the peaceful contemplation of the Talmud and Scriptures. He was like Jeremiah in the Old Testament, a man conceived for controversy and born for trouble.

Paul’s strength was Jesus and His comfort was in knowing the Lord Jesus stood with him in all the controversies that came his way, for the sake of the gospel. Sharing the gospel of peace is not always easy and sometimes provokes a hostile response. But Jesus stands beside us that we may witness to the power of His love to give peace and to His promise, to give eternal life to those who receive Him through faith.

“PRAISE TO THE LORD, THE ALMIGHTY”(Public Domain)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!

O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!

Let all who hear, now to His temple draw near, Joining in glad adoration!

Praise to the Lord, who over all things is wondrously reigning.

And as on wings of an eagle, uplifting, sustaining.

Have you not seen? All that is needful has been, Sent by His gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;

Surely His goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.

Ponder anew, What the Almighty can do, as with His love He befriends you.

Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me adore Him!

All that has life and breath, come now with praises before Him!

Let the amen, Sound from His people again. Gladly forever adore Him!

PRAYER

Dearest Lord Jesus, even as you stood by St. Paul and encouraged him to continue to bear witness to you, assure us that you stand with us, as we bear witness to you, with the words and ways of our lives. Open our eyes to see the opportunities we have to speak your name. Bless us with your Spirit that we may seize those opportunities to make you known as Prince of Peace and Saviour of all who receive your grace through faith in your Name. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven.

Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,

Forever and ever. Amen

THE CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

BENEDICTION

Hebrews 13:6

“So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’”