

August 7 – 12th Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Hear the word of the Lord,
you rulers of Sodom!

Listen to the teaching of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the Lord;

I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of fed beasts;

I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.

When you come to appear before me,
who asked this from your hand?
Trample my courts no more;

bringing offerings is futile;
incense is an abomination to me.

New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation--
I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.

Your new moons and your appointed festivals
my soul hates;

they have become a burden to me,
I am weary of bearing them.

When you stretch out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;

even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;

cease to do evil,
learn to do good;

seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,

defend the orphan,
plead for the widow.

Come now, let us argue it out,
says the Lord:

though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be like snow;

though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.

If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;

but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be devoured by the sword;
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Psalm 50:1-8, 23-24

1 The Lord, the God of gods, has spoken; *
he has called the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

2 Out of Zion, perfect in its beauty, *
God reveals himself in glory.

3 Our God will come and will not keep silence; *
before him there is a consuming flame,
and round about him a raging storm.

4 He calls the heavens and the earth from above *
to witness the judgment of his people.

5 "Gather before me my loyal followers, *
those who have made a covenant with me
and sealed it with sacrifice."

6 Let the heavens declare the rightness of his cause; *
for God himself is judge.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak:
"O Israel, I will bear witness against you; *
for I am God, your God.

8 I do not accuse you because of your sacrifices; *
your offerings are always before me.

23 Consider this well, you who forget God, *
lest I rend you and there be none to deliver you.

24 Whoever offers me the sacrifice of thanksgiving honors me; *
but to those who keep in my way will I show the salvation of God."

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old-- and Sarah herself was barren-- because he considered himself faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

August 14 – 13th Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 5:1-7

Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:

My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;

he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;

he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,

judge between me
and my vineyard.

What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?

When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.

I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;

I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.

I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;

I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,

and the people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;

he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;

righteousness,
but heard a cry!

Psalm 80:1-2, 8-18

1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

2 In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, *
stir up your strength and come to help us.

8 You have brought a vine out of Egypt; *
you cast out the nations and planted it.

9 You prepared the ground for it; *
it took root and filled the land.

10 The mountains were covered by its shadow *
and the towering cedar trees by its boughs.

11 You stretched out its tendrils to the Sea *
and its branches to the River.

12 Why have you broken down its wall, *
so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?

13 The wild boar of the forest has ravaged it, *
and the beasts of the field have grazed upon it.

14 Turn now, O God of hosts, look down from heaven;
behold and tend this vine; *
preserve what your right hand has planted.

15 They burn it with fire like rubbish; *
at the rebuke of your countenance let them perish.

16 Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, *
the son of man you have made so strong for yourself.

17 And so will we never turn away from you; *
give us life, that we may call upon your Name.

18 Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Hebrews 11:29-12:2

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets-- who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented-- of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

August 21 – 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 1:4-10

The word of the Lord came to me saying,

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the Lord said to me,

"Do not say, 'I am only a boy';
for you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you,
Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,

says the Lord."

Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me,

"Now I have put my words in your mouth.
See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant."

Psalm 71:1-6

1 In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; *
let me never be ashamed.

2 In your righteousness, deliver me and set me free; *
incline your ear to me and save me.

3 Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe; *
you are my crag and my stronghold.

4 Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, *
from the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.

5 For you are my hope, O Lord God, *
my confidence since I was young.

6 I have been sustained by you ever since I was born;
from my mother's womb you have been my strength; *
my praise shall be always of you.

Hebrews 12:18-29

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. (For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what is shaken-- that is, created things-- so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

August 21 – 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 2:4-13

Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus says the Lord:

What wrong did your ancestors find in me
that they went far from me,
and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves?

They did not say, "Where is the Lord
who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
who led us in the wilderness,
in a land of deserts and pits,
in a land of drought and deep darkness,
in a land that no one passes through,
where no one lives?"

I brought you into a plentiful land
to eat its fruits and its good things.

But when you entered you defiled my land,
and made my heritage an abomination.

The priests did not say, "Where is the Lord?"
Those who handle the law did not know me;
the rulers transgressed against me;
the prophets prophesied by Baal,
and went after things that do not profit.

Therefore once more I accuse you, says the Lord,
and I accuse your children's children.

Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look,
send to Kedar and examine with care;
see if there has ever been such a thing.

Has a nation changed its gods,
even though they are no gods?

But my people have changed their glory
for something that does not profit.

Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
be shocked, be utterly desolate,
says the Lord,

for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,

the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for themselves,
cracked cisterns
that can hold no water.

Psalm 81:1, 10-16

Exultate Deo

1 Sing with joy to God our strength *
and raise a loud shout to the God of Jacob.

10 I am the Lord your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt and said, *
"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

11 And yet my people did not hear my voice, *
and Israel would not obey me.

12 So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their hearts, *
to follow their own devices.

13 Oh, that my people would listen to me! *
that Israel would walk in my ways!

14 I should soon subdue their enemies *
and turn my hand against their foes.

15 Those who hate the Lord would cringe before him, *
and their punishment would last for ever.

16 But Israel would I feed with the finest wheat *
and satisfy him with honey from the rock.

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." So we can say with confidence,

"The Lord is my helper;
I will not be afraid.

What can anyone do to me?"

Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.