

9th Sunday in Ordinary Time - C

Note: Where a Scripture text is underlined in the body of this discussion, it is recommended that the reader look up and read that passage.

1st Reading - 1 Kings 8:41-43

According to 2 Chronicles 3:1, Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah; the spot which had been selected by David, his father. The site had been the threshing-floor of Ornan (Araunah) the Jebusite. It is located to the north of Mount Zion, the eastern hill to which the city of Jerusalem was then confined. Moriah has been occupied ever since the building of the Temple and is today occupied by the western wall of the second Temple (the wailing wall), the Mosque of Omar, and the Dome of the Rock. According to Jewish lore:

When Noah the righteous left the ark, after the waters of the flood had receded and the face of the earth was revealed, he came with his sons first to Mount Moriah. There they sacrificed a thank offering to the Lord, on the same spot where Adam had sacrificed and where Abraham, generations later, brought his offering. It is told that when Abraham and Isaac reached Mount Moriah, the Holy One, blessed be He, pointed out the altar to Abraham and said: ‘There is the altar! Upon this altar did Adam, Cain, and Abel place their offerings! Upon this altar did Noah and his sons place their offerings!’ On a nearby hill, Shem, the son of Noah, interred the skull of Adam, which he had taken with him into the ark and guarded during the flood. Since then the hill is called Golgotha – the Skull. [Vilnay, Zev, *The Legends of Jerusalem*, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1973, page 70]

Our first reading for today is from the account of the dedication of this first Temple in Jerusalem.

[Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord and, stretching out his hands toward heaven, said:] ⁴¹ **“To the foreigner, likewise, who is not of your people Israel, but comes from a distant land to honor you** ⁴² **(since men will learn of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm),**

The “foreigner” referred to here is not a resident alien but someone of a foreign land who is attracted to Israel’s God (such as Naaman, the Syrian, who we read about in 2 Kings 5). The rights of the resident alien were established in Numbers 15:14ff; these are the rights of other foreigners.

when he comes and prays toward this temple,

Prayer toward Jerusalem by those in exile or abroad is mentioned in Tobit 3:11 and Daniel 6:11.

⁴³ **listen from your heavenly dwelling. Do all that the foreigner asks of you, that all the peoples of the earth may know your name, may fear you as do your people Israel,**

“Fear” as uses here is not terror, but reverential awe.

and may acknowledge that this temple which I have built is dedicated to your honor.

2nd Reading - Galatians 1:1-2, 6-10

Shortly after Saint Paul’s second visit to Galatia (during his second missionary journey, A.D. 51-53) some agitators challenged Paul’s authority as an apostle; possibly on the grounds that his commission did not come from Christ personally. They claimed that he did not preach the true gospel since he neglected the Mosaic Law, thus watering down the requirements of the gospel for the sake of the Gentiles. The new demands of these Judaizers caused confusion within the Galatian community which prompted Saint Paul to send this strongly worded letter, possibly written from Ephesus in 54-55, warning against this “different gospel” and defending his position as an apostle.

^{1:1} Paul, an apostle not from human beings nor through a human being but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead, ²

Here Saint Paul deliberately uses the name “apostle” to emphasize his equality with the Twelve. His authoritative commission comes directly from the Risen Lord.

and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia:

“When he calls himself an apostle not of human making but through Jesus Christ, he does away with those who had only human authority for styling themselves apostles. The churches at that time were being thrown into turmoil by false preachers. He greets these churches with all the brethren who are with him. In that greeting he also blesses them, so that their fitness to receive the word of the Lord may be established” [Cassiodorus (monk) (ca. A.D. 485-540), *Summary of Galatians*, 1,1,1].

⁶ I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking

This can be either “so soon after my evangelization and your conversion” or “so easily.”

the one who called you

In Pauline theology this would be God the Father.

by (the) grace (of Christ)

The Father’s plan is executed through the grace of Christ.

for a different gospel ⁷ (not that there is another).

Since the gospel is a “force for salvation” (Romans 1:16), emanating from Christ, who is not divided (1 Corinthians 1:13), there can only be one gospel (Ephesians 4:5).

But there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the gospel of Christ.

The Judaizers are leading them astray.

“He is saying, ‘You have not departed from this teaching to that but from the one who called you. . . . The very father who gave the law is the one who called you to this gospel. . . . And if you desert this gospel, you will not find another. For the Lord does not preach some things through us and others through the other apostles’” [Theodoret of Cyr (ca. A.D. 450), *Interpretation of the Fourteen Epistles of Paul*, Galatians 1:6-7].

⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach (to you) a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed!

In Galatians 3:19-20 Saint Paul refers to the Jewish belief that the Mosaic Law was given to men by angels. Even if one of them were to appear again with a modified gospel, he is not to be heard, but instead he is to be the object of a curse.

⁹ As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, let that one be accursed!

“Lest you should think that the words came from passion or were spoken hyperbolically or through a loss of self-control, he says the same things over again” [Saint John Chrysostom (between A.D. 393-397), *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, 1,9].

¹⁰ Am I now currying favor with human beings or God? Or am I seeking to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ.

Saint Paul rejects the idea that he has watered down the gospel in order to win more converts. Before his conversion, he had persecuted the Church of God. Now, the service of Christ has delivered him from such egotism.

Gospel - Luke 7:1-10

Today’s gospel reading is the familiar healing of the centurion’s servant. It is a story which relates to us the effectiveness of a prayer of petition; a prayer which induces the almighty God to work miracles.

^{7:1} When he had finished all his words to the people, he entered Capernaum.

This account follows after the Sermon on the Mount.

² A centurion

A centurion was a Roman soldier with authority over one-hundred men. The centurion was in all likelihood a Gentile and a pagan serving under Herod Antipas.

there had a slave who was ill and about to die, and he was valuable to him.

In Matthew's account the servant is a paralytic. Luke is always conscious of human relations and so he not only tells us that the servant is near death, but that the centurion "valued" him – value not being monetary value, but regard or esteem.

³ When he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and save the life of his slave. ⁴ They approached Jesus and strongly urged him to come,

What stands out here is the humility of the centurion. He does not belong to the chosen people so he swallows his pride and asks the elders of the Jews to intercede for him, which they do, vigorously.

saying, "He deserves to have you do this for him, ⁵ for he loves our nation and he built the synagogue for us." ⁶ And Jesus went with them, but when he was only a short distance from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof. ⁷ Therefore, I did not consider myself worthy to come to you;

Again the centurion humbles himself by sending friends to intercept Jesus. The centurion does not want Jesus to become ritually unclean by entering the house of a Gentile.

but say the word and let my servant be healed.

The humility of the centurion is coupled with his faith that Jesus can accomplish the prayed-for task. This faith and humility must become our own when, in our Eucharistic liturgy, when we pray "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed." as Jesus enters under our roof to nourish our soul.

⁸ For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹ When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him

Only in His humanity could Jesus experience this surprise and wonderment and so grow in knowledge.

and, turning, said to the crowd following him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."

Saint Luke takes great delight in citing the reactions of Jesus (Luke 7:44; 9:55; 10:22; 14:25; 22:61; 23:28). This is the first of many examples of faith in Luke's gospel (Luke 7:50; 8:25, 48, 50).

¹⁰ When the messengers returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

The Greek word used here, *hygiainonta*, indicates that the servant was fully recovered and able to perform vigorous activity.