

12th 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 - Zechariah 12:10-11

The Book of Zechariah (Zechariah means “Yahweh Remembers”) comes chronologically after that of Haggai. The prophet Zechariah belonged to a priestly family which had returned from the Babylonian exile. Like Haggai, he was called by God in 520 B.C. He probably lived until very near the time the new Temple was finished.

When the Jews returned to Jerusalem after being released by Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, an altar was immediately erected on the ruins of the Temple of Solomon and sacrifices were offered to Yahweh. Then the building of a new Temple was begun. But after the foundations had been laid, the work was interrupted and finally stopped by the interference of the Samaritans. Haggai had given the first impulse to the building of the temple, Zechariah saw to it that the people and their leaders did not lose courage as the work slowly progressed and the opposition of the Samaritans increased. Like Haggai, Zechariah saw in the completion of the Temple the prelude to the new and glorious age of the Messiah.

Again and again in the course of his prophecy Zechariah seeks to revive the chosen people’s faith in their glorious destiny by picturing the doom of their oppressions and the great peace of the Messianic Kingdom.

¹⁰ I will pour out

A phrase found frequently in eschatological passages. It helps to maintain the setting of the last days of the Lord.

on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and petition;

That God will pour a spirit into people means that He will take the initiative in bringing about in them a new interior attitude. The tenor of this section indicates that the new attitude must be one flowing from repentance for some wrongdoing which sprang from an evil attitude.

and they shall look on him

All the ancient versions have “to me” which expresses the basic turning or converting toward God. Removing “to me” and placing “on him” in its place gives the sense of the quotation of this in John 19:37. A translation with “to me” would read “*and they shall look to me, and they shall mourn for him whom they have thrust through as one mourns for an only son.*” Either translation may be correct.

whom they have thrust through, and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only son,

and they shall grieve over him as one grieves over a first-born. ¹¹ On that day the mourning in Jerusalem shall be as great as the mourning of Hadadrimmon

Can be either the storm-god Hadad or the chief deity of Damascus, Rimmon (2 Kings 5:18), whose death was mourned each year at the return of the dry season. Jerome identified the term as a city very near Megiddo, later called Maximianopolis, and today Tel Mutesellim. Because it controlled the trade routes between the countries north and south of Palestine, Megiddo has been the site of great battles throughout sacred and profane history.

in the plain of Megiddo.

2nd Reading - Galatians 3:26-29

At the beginning of his third missionary journey, around the year A.D. 53, Saint Paul passed through Galatia to visit the Christian communities he had established in the area (Acts 13:14ff), which he had also visited during his second journey (Acts 16:1-5). The communities in question were in the southern part of Galatia: Pisidia, Antioch, Konium, Derbe, and Lystra. The Galatians had responded very well to Paul's apostolate and the churches were flourishing.

However, on this last journey, Saint Paul was very surprised to find that the Galatian Christians (most of whom came from a Gentile background) had been led astray by "false brethren," (Judaizers) who made out that Christians should conform to the Mosaic law and, therefore, should be circumcised. Perhaps because he was short of time, the Apostle was unable to go into the matter in detail; at any rate, when he reached Ephesus (A.D. 53-54) he wrote the Galatians a letter refuting the errors involved, in which he goes into the whole question of the relationship between the Gospel and Mosaic law, between the Old Covenant and the New. He tries to get them to see that the key point is this: Accepting Mosaic doctrine would mean in practice renouncing the justification won for us by Christ -- and therefore denying the value of the redemption; it would imply renouncing freedom, because they would be submitting to the voice of the Law, which is slavery; it would mean rejecting the grace and salvation which faith in Jesus the Christ brings with it. The universality of the Church would be destroyed and Christ's doctrine irreparably damaged.

The Judaizers, for their part, were arguing that God Himself had instituted the Law of Moses, which Christ had come not "to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). They even went as far as to invoke the authority of the twelve against Paul, ignoring the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem which had gone into this whole question and with whose teaching Saint Paul was in line (Acts 15:28-29).

²⁶ For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus.

Filial adoption is the new relation of Christians to God, achieved "through Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:17). Faith for Paul is more than belief, it is that attitude of man by which he accepts the divine revelation made known through Christ and responds to it with a complete dedication of his own personal life to him – In the context here, they have accepted Christian baptism with all its spiritual washing and rebirth.

²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ

Baptism is the sacramental complement of faith, the rite whereby a person achieves union with Christ and publicly manifests his commitment.

have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Put on the garment of purity. Now we must be imitators of Christ in all our actions.

“Since he has said something great and remarkable, he also explains how one is made a son. ‘For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.’ Why didn’t he say, ‘All you who were baptized into Christ have been born of God,’ since that is the inference from showing that they were sons? Because what he says is more awe-inspiring. For if Christ is the Son of God and you put Him on, having the Son inside yourself and being made like him, you have been made one in kind and form.” [Saint John Chrysostom (ca. A.D. 392), *Homilies on the Epistle to the Galatians*, 2,3,25-26

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Secondary differences vanish through the effects of this primary incorporation of Christians into Christ’s body through one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

“Do you see how insatiable his soul is? For having said that we have become sons of God through faith, he does not stop here but seeks out something more to say, which can make still more plain our closer unity with Christ. And having said ‘You have clothed yourselves with Christ,’ he is not content with this, but interpreting it he speaks of something more intimate than this association and says, ‘you are all one in Christ Jesus’ – that is, you have one form, one character, that of Christ. What words could inspire more awe than these? The former Jew or slave is clothed in the form not of an angel or archangel but of the Lord Himself and in himself displays Christ.” [Saint John Chrysostom (ca. A.D. 392), *Homilies on the Epistle to the Galatians*, 3,27]

²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendant, heirs according to the promise.

Genesis 22:17-18 says “Your decedents shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your descendants shall the nations of the earth bless themselves.” We get all this through Isaac, not Ishmael (Romans 9:7).

Gospel - Luke 9:18-24

Luke uses Chapter nine of his gospel to segue (transition) from Jesus’ Galilean ministry to His journey to Jerusalem. The themes of Jesus’ Galilean ministry where He preached about the fulfillment of God’s promise, restored men and women to health, and cast out demons, are now focused through the cross.

¹⁸ Once when Jesus was praying in solitude,

In Lucan imagery, when Jesus prays, something very important theologically is about to occur.

and the disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” ¹⁹ They said in reply, “John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, ‘One of the ancient prophets has arisen.’”

These answers concur with those given to Herod in Luke 9:7-8.

²⁰ Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter said in reply, “The Messiah of God.”

Peter is the spokesperson for the disciples. In the Lucan story line, Peter’s answer is dependent on what he has seen Jesus do and what he himself has done in Jesus’ name. Thus, Peter’s answer focuses on Jesus’ power to save needy people from the forces of evil.

²¹ He rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone.

Jesus at once demands silence, lest the crowds acclaim Him according to their false political or national ideas. His kingdom is not of this earth. The “Messianic Secret” of Mark thus becomes in Luke the mystery of the suffering Messiah.

²² He said, “The Son of Man must

All three synoptic gospels use the word “must” here, emphasizing the necessity of Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf.

suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised.”

See Psalm 118:22. Luke omits Peter’s blustering remonstrance and Jesus’ stern reply (Matthew 16:22f; Mark 8:32f).

²³ Then he said to all,

In Luke’s gospel, the reference to “all” would be to those who were fed at the multiplication of loaves, thereby linking the sacrifice of the cross with the Eucharistic symbolism of the miraculous feeding.

“If anyone wishes to come after me,

Luke has not only left out Peter’s contradiction, he now proceeds to apply the message of the cross to all Christians.

he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

To be a follower requires that we walk in His footsteps and suffer the same indignities for truth – even to death.

²⁴ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

Few sayings of Jesus are so well attested as this. It occurs in Matthew 10:39 and 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24 (here) and 17:33. Luke omits “and for the gospel” which occurs after “for my sake” in Mark 8:35 thus Luke concentrates attention much more personally upon Jesus.

The remainder of this teaching is contained in verses 25-27:

²⁵ What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself? ²⁶ Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”