

A reading from the first book of Sirach.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

When a sieve is shaken, the refuse appears;
so do one's faults when one speaks.
The kiln tests the potter's vessels;
so the test of the just person is in tribulation.
Its fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree;
so a person's speech discloses the cultivation of the mind.
Do not praise someone before they speak,
for this is the way people are tested.



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds then
look up at the people and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

When this perishable body puts on imperishability,
and this mortal body puts on immortality,
then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin,

and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God,

who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved,

be steadfast, immovable,

always excelling in the work of the Lord,

because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

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Pause for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – C 08

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus told his disciples a parable:

“Can a blind person guide a blind person?

Will not both fall into a pit?

A disciple is not above the teacher,
but everyone who is fully qualified will be like their teacher.

Why do you see the speck in your neighbour’s eye,
but do not notice the log in your own eye?

Or how can you say to your neighbour,
‘Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,’
when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye?

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye,
and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour’s eye.

No good tree bears bad fruit,
nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit;

for each tree is known by its own fruit.

Figs are not gathered from thorns,
nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.

Out of the good treasure of the heart,
the good person produces good,

and out of evil treasure,
the evil person produces evil;

for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE IN DEPTH

Reading I: Sirach 27:4-7

Some parts of the Wisdom literature are highly doctrinal and speculative; other parts consist of common sense observations on human behaviour and the moral imperative. Today's reading is of the latter kind. It spells out some of the dangers that threaten human integrity. The inner worth of human beings is to be assessed from their words and deeds, just as "the fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree." This is the same metaphor as occurs in today's gospel reading from the Sermon on the Mount.

In RCL's alternative reading from Isaiah, verses 10-11 are dealt with under the Fifteenth Sunday, Year A. In verses 12-13 the prophet depicts the return from exile as a new exodus. This idea could be related to the new life in Christ expected of those who have responded to the preaching of the gospel.

Responsorial Psalm: 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16

This psalm of thanksgiving is preoccupied with the theme of moral retribution. Yhwh is praised for his mighty acts, especially in rewarding the righteous with prosperity, so that they become like fruitful trees.

According to the Mishnah, this psalm was used at the morning sacrifice, particularly on the sabbath. It expresses the Deuteronomic theology, a viewpoint that has to be balanced by that of other Works such as Psalm 73 or the Book of Job, which recognize that the righteous do not always prosper and that reward often seems to go to the Wicked.

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

This reading comes from the magnificent climax of Paul's charter on the resurrection of the dead. RCL's extra verses (1 Cor 15:51-53) form the beginning of the pericope. They describe in symbolic terms the events of the End (the trumpet blast, etc.).

The Corinthians, with their gnosticizing proclivities, believed that their initiation as Christians had already introduced them into the resurrection life, and that therefore there was no need for a resurrection after death. Paul argues that belief in Christ's resurrection carries with it a corollary belief in the resurrection of the dead, and vice versa. This is because Paul sets the resurrection of Christ in the framework of Jewish apocalyptic expectation. The Jewish apocalyptists expected a general resurrection at the end of history. The Easter event revealed that one resurrection had already taken place before the end of history—that of Christ, the "first fruits" (1 Cor 15:20, 23). His resurrection is not only the first instance of the final resurrection but also one that will make all other resurrections at the end possible. But there is an "order" in these resurrections.

Paul derives a second idea from Jewish apocalyptic, namely, the nature of the resurrection life. It is not a mere resuscitation, that is, a recovery of the old mode of existence before death; it is an elevation to an entirely new mode of existence. The resurrected will acquire a "spiritual" body. Paul illustrates this by a series of contrasts and by the analogy of the seed and the grown plant (1 Cor 15:35-44).

The metaphor shifts in verse 53. Instead of speaking of a transformation, Paul speaks of the resurrection body as a new garment—the same metaphor he will use later in 2 Cor 5. This shows that we should not press his metaphors into literal descriptions. When that transformation or clothing has taken place, then death, the last enemy, will be finally defeated.

In our reading today, Paul anticipates this final triumph in the lyrical terms of a text that combines Isaiah 24:8 and Hosea 13:14 (1 Cor 15:54). In the original context of the Isaian quotation, death and Sheol were being invited to do their worst for the punishment of God's people. Paul turns the text right around—it is no longer a challenge to death to come and do its worst, but a celebration of Christ's destruction of death's sting. The sting, Paul comments, is sin. That is to say, in the Christian perspective death is not simply a biological fact; it is a final expression of the consequences of sin, of complete and final separation from God.

“And the power of sin is the law” (1 Cor 15:56). Here Paul recalls his arguments in Galatians 3, Romans 5:13, and 7:7-25. The Law came to increase the trespass. It did this by exposing sin for the reality that it is and, as Paul argues, actually increases sin. Why does Paul drag in his earlier theologizing about the Law at this point? No doubt because the Corinthian enthusiasts believed they were immune from sin and death. The victory over sin and death is already won, though only in principle. Christians stand between D-day and V-day. Yet so certain of V-day is Paul that he uses the present tense: “gives us the victory.” With this assurance his converts can return to the workaday world, knowing that their labours contribute to the final victory and will be taken up into Christ's finished work.

Gospel: Luke 6:39-45

This reading is a continuation of Luke's Sermon on the Plain. Since only the aphorism about the log and the speck and the parabolic saying about the tree and its fruits appear also in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, we may conclude that only these two items already occurred in the Great Sermon of Q.

Luke has prefaced the little parable with the aphorism of the blind leading the blind and the saying about the disciple not being above the teacher that have parallels elsewhere in Matthew. Luke appears to have derived them from Q but has redactionally transferred them to this position. The parable of the tree and its fruit thus becomes a commentary on the preceding sayings. Since the opening saying of the series (the blind leading the blind) is directed to church leaders, we may presume that for Luke the rest of the passage is, too, including the parable of the tree and its fruits.

RCL concludes the reading with a parable on the two houses, the close of the Great Sermon in both Matthew and Luke.

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