

A reading from the book of the prophet Habakkuk.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

“O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?
Or cry to you ‘Violence!’
and you will not save?
Why do you make me see bad behaviour
and look at trouble?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.”
Then the Lord answered me and said:
“Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so that a runner may read it.
For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie.
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay.
Look at the proud person!
Their spirit is not right in them,
but the righteous person lives by their faith.”



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

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – C 27

A reading from the second letter of Saint Paul to Timothy.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Beloved:

I remind you to rekindle the gift of God
that is within you through the laying on of my hands;
for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice,
but rather a spirit of power
and of love and of self-discipline.

Do not be ashamed, then,
of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner,
but join with me in suffering for the Gospel,
relying on the power of God.

Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me,
in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Guard the good treasure entrusted to you,
with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

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 27

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The apostles said to the Lord,

“Increase our faith!”

The Lord replied,

“If you had faith the size of a mustard seed,

you could say to this mulberry tree,

‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’

and it would obey you.

Who among you would say to your slave

who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field,

‘Come here at once and take your place at the table’?

Would you not rather say to him,

‘Prepare supper for me,

put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink;

later you may eat and drink’?

Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?

So you also,

when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say,

‘We are worthless slaves,

we have only done what we ought to have done!’”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE IN DEPTH

Reading I: Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

These verses give the gist of the three parts of Habakkuk. First the prophet cries out against the injustices that he and his people are suffering at the hand of foreign conquerors. How long will YHWH let this go on and not intervene?

Then comes the answer: YHWH will intervene, but in his own good time. It may seem slow, but come it will. Meanwhile, the attitude required of YHWH's servants is what the prophet calls "faith": "the righteous shall live by his faith."

The meaning of the word translated as "faith" here (*emunah*) is steadfast loyalty, holding on in obedience to YHWH's law, even when it apparently pays no dividends. This word becomes very important both for the Qumran covenant and for the New Testament.

In the Qumran commentary on Habakkuk we read: "This [that is, our saying] refers to all in Jewry who carry out the law [that is, to the Qumraners]. On account of their labor and their faith in him who expounded the law aright [that is, the sect's founder, the Teacher of Righteousness] God will deliver them from the house of judgment."

Here faith has already acquired its New Testament sense of personal trust. Compare Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11, which develop the notion of personal trust adumbrated at Qumran to mean trust in the justifying act of God in Christ toward the ungodly.

Hab 2:4 thus becomes the key text for Paul's doctrine of justification—a considerable development from the original meaning in Habakkuk. Heb 10:38 reverts closer to the original sense. For this author, faith recovers its meaning of holding on in the midst of adversity.

Responsorial Psalm: 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

The Venite consists of two parts—the first a call to worship, the second a warning against neglect of the word of God. The first part is very popular among Anglicans as the invitatory canticle of Morning Prayer, but in most recent revisions the stern warnings of the second part have frequently been omitted.

Yet it was this second part that the author of Hebrews (Heb 3:7-4:13) took up and expounded as especially relevant to his church. The situation of the people of this church was that they were growing stale instead of advancing in the Christian life, just as Israel grew tired in the wilderness.

Reading II: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Although belonging to the Pauline corpus, the Pastoral Epistles are widely regarded as deuteropauline, written within the Pauline school but reflecting the conditions of the

generation after the Apostle himself and seeking to preserve his teaching in the new situation.

Two features of this passage may reflect the subapostolic situation:

(1) the channeling of the ministerial charismata through the laying on of hands instead of by direct inspiration, as in 1 Corinthians (“the gift that is within you through the laying on of my hands”);

(2) the consolidation of the apostolic message into a “pattern of sound words.”

Ernst Käsemann has characterized these developments as “early catholicism,” which for him is a loaded term implying degeneration and corruption.

But they can be recognized as legitimate and necessary adaptations in the changed situation, following the decease of the apostles and their consequent inability to exercise the kind of personal control over the charismata that Paul did in 1 Corinthians.

For “Timothy”—and therefore all successors to the ministry of the apostles—must not merely preserve the tradition but give living testimony to it, that is, unpackage it and make it relevant to the contemporary world. Such testimony, the text warns, will involve a “share of suffering for the Gospel.”

Newman, in his Anglican days, once startled the comfortable bishops of the established Church by saying, “We could not wish them a more blessed termination of their course than the spoiling of their goods and martyrdom” (Tract 1, 1833). Very unrealistic in the situation, no doubt, but soundly based on our text.

Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

The request “Increase our faith” comes immediately after a warning to beware of temptations to faith (skandala).

The parable, which forms the second half of our gospel reading, is connected with the saying about faith, because it warns the disciples against supposing that faith, and the obedient service of the Lord in which faith is expressed, establishes a claim for reward. “When you have done all that is commanded you, say ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’”

Reginald H. Fuller