

Daily Office Devotional, Wednesday, October 7, 2020
Proper 22, the week of the eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

(Today we celebrate the Feast of Birgitta of Sweden. See below.)

Daily Office Lectionary Readings

AM Psalm 119:145-176; PM Psalm 128, 129, 130

Micah 2:1-13; Acts 23:23-35; Luke 7:18-35

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, Book of Common Prayer

Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, Book of Common Prayer

Compline (Night Prayer), Page 127, Book of Common Prayer

Daily Office Old Testament Reading, Micah 2:1-13

2:1Alas for those who devise wickedness and evil deeds on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in their power. 2They covet fields, and seize them; houses, and take them away; they oppress householder and house, people and their inheritance. 3Therefore thus says the LORD: Now, I am devising against this family an evil from which you cannot remove your necks; and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time. 4On that day they shall take up a taunt song against you, and wail with bitter lamentation, and say, "We are utterly ruined; the LORD alters the inheritance of my people; how he removes it from me! Among our captors he parcels out our fields." 5Therefore you will have no one to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD.

6 "Do not preach" --thus they preach-- "one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us." 7Should this be said, O house of Jacob? Is the Lord's patience exhausted? Are these his doings? Do not my words do good to one who walks uprightly? 8But you rise up against my people as an enemy; you strip the robe from the peaceful, from those who pass by trustingly with no thought of war. 9The women of my people you drive out from their pleasant houses; from their young children you take away my glory forever. 10Arise and go; for this is no place to rest, because of uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction. 11If someone were to go about uttering empty falsehoods, saying, "I will preach to you of wine and strong drink," such a one would be the preacher for this people!

12 I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the survivors of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture; it will resound with

people. 13The one who breaks out will go up before them; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king will pass on before them, the LORD at their head.

David's Reflections

I sense a conflict within the prophet in today's reading. He seems to have felt constrained to preach judgment against those among his people who oppressed the poor and powerless. After all, God had made war against those who oppressed and enslaved the Israelites in Egypt and had delivered them by the hand of Moses. God the warrior fights for God's people against those who oppress the poor and powerless.

Yet, the people who oppressed the poor and powerless were themselves Israelites, worshippers of the God who makes war against oppressors for the sake of his oppressed little ones. Something must have been lacking in their worship, because their lives did not reflect the peace-making, delivering God they were worshipping.

Micah found himself, toward the end of this passage, reassuring his people that God would continue to be their savior, even if that same God resisted the oppressors among the very people God sought to save. The nation might find itself suffering oppression from outside again from the contending empires on her borders. According to Micah, a nation that thrives through oppression would find herself experiencing God's judgment in the form of international oppression.

These verses certainly sound a warning to us. The church must not lose her objectivity out of devotion to her compatriots and her country. Micah, lover of his people, found himself in an adversarial relationship with the nation because of the injustices that were commonplace. We must always be ready to take a prophetic stance for the sake of any individual or group that finds itself under the heel of deliberate exploitation or forgotten by neglect. We must always be ready to advocate for the core values and beliefs of our nation that are consistent with our faith when we see those values being ignored or subverted. Love of God and of country constrain us to do so.

Collect of the Day: Proper 22, the eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us

those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 234)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Birgitta of Sweden.

http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/birgitta_sweden.html

Collect of the Feast of Birgitta of Sweden

O God, who beholds all things and whose judgment is always mercy; by the example of your servant Brigitta of Sweden, give to us in this life the vision of your kingdom where Jesus Christ is all and in all, that we may pattern our earthly lives on things heavenly, where our lives are hidden with Christ in you, who with him and the Holy Spirit live and reign for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Grace

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 100)

For stewardship of creation

O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 259)

A Prayer for Light

Grant us, Lord, the lamp of charity which never fails, that it may burn in us and shed its light on those around us, and that by its brightness we may have a vision of that holy City, where dwells the true and never-failing Light, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 110)

Without a love that forgives, without reconciliation, what future is possible for human beings?
—Brother Roger of Taizé

God of the tie that binds, God of knotty relationships:

Jesus told us that the greatest commandments are to love you and love our neighbors, but there are people in our lives with whom our relationships have been bruised or broken. We know that forgiveness is one of the first steps to healing. Help us take

that step and forgive those who need our forgiveness; help us also to receive forgiveness from those who need to forgive us. *Amen.*

A Collect for Mission

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.*

(BCP, 101)