

Daily Office Devotional, Wednesday, October 14, 2020
Proper 23, the week of the twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, translator. (See below.)

Daily Office Lectionary Readings

AM Psalm 119:1-24; PM Psalm 12, 13, 14
Jonah 1:17-2:10; Acts 27:9-26; Luke 9:1-17

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, Jonah 1:17-2:10

17But the LORD provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

2:1Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, 2saying, "I called to the LORD out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. 3You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. 4Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy temple?' 5The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head 6at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O LORD my God. 7As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. 8Those who worship vain idols forsake their true loyalty. 9But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Deliverance belongs to the LORD!"

10 Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.

David's Reflections

Antonia Machado, Spanish poet, wrote these lines.
Mankind owns four things
That are no good at sea--

Rudder, anchor, oars,
And the fear of going down.*

Jonah now had been cast into the sea. He had neither rudder, anchor, nor oars and he could not avoid going down. God took him down, down into the abyss within the body of a sea creature. One does not have to take this story literally to get its force. In fact, this is one instance where the quarrel over whether the story is a literal event or a prophetic parable could distract the arguers from the imagery and the impact of the story.

The prophet's experience captures something of our common struggle with God. Jonah's people had preserved their ethnic identity during their captivity in Babylon and now some were returning from exile to Palestine. They feared being absorbed ethnically by their neighbors; thus, they sought to preserve their religious and national identity. A spirit of exclusivism had dampened their sense of mission to be a light of God's saving love to all people, Hebrew and nonHebrew alike (the vision of Isaiah 40-66).

Jonah's flight had been arrested and he had been taken into the abyss, into a place of powerlessness and despair. His nation had been in such an abyss with their Temple destroyed and many of their people displaced into the land of the conquerors. Now that the nation was emerging from the belly of the great fish, would they rediscover their unique mission to the world or would they flee it as had Jonah of old? Is it not striking that the sailors in the ship showed more sensitivity than did Jonah? And, is it not striking that God had to teach Jonah about sensitivity and mercy, vis-à-vis Jonah's indignation and anger?

If you have found your life in a personal abyss, that belly of the sea creature place, what have you learned there about yourself, your journey, and your previous assumptions about the direction of your life and your reasons for being? What have you learned about sensitivity and compassion trumping indignation and anger? The darkness and powerlessness can be very instructive. As we will see tomorrow, Jonah had more to learn. The abyss had not worked a total transformation.

Of course, I share your fear of going down, of being in that place. We could share about our abyss moments over coffee and nod with mutual understanding. Yet, somehow being there propels us into new spaces and sparks transformation. And, it takes just a bit of the fear out of going down. At least we've learned that we can't go any lower down than God, that we find God in the bottom of the abyss. Did not

Jonah voice his lament to God from that abyss? And God heard. And, we've learned that God delivers us to a larger life and a larger sense of being and mission.

* Antonio Machado, "Fourteen Poems," in *Times Alone*, trans. Robert Bly (Wesleyan UP, 1983), p. 113.

Collect of the Day: Proper 23, the nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 234-235)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, translator. (Died 15 Oct 1906). <http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/SIJSchereschewski.htm>

Collect of the Feast of Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky

O God, who in your providence called Joseph Schereschewsky to the ministry of this church and gave him the gifts and the perseverance to translate the Holy Scriptures: Inspire us, by his example and prayers, to commit our talents to your service, confident that you uphold those whom you call; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect of the Feast of Ignatius of Antioch

Almighty God, we praise you for your bishop and martyr Ignatius of Antioch, who offered himself as grain to be ground by the teeth of wild beasts that he might present to you the pure bread of sacrifice. Accept the willing tribute of our lives, and give us a share in the pure and spotless offering of your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, 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)

In the Evening

O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last.

Amen. (BCP, 833)

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)