

Daily Office Devotional, Thursday, October 16, 2020
Proper 23, the week of the nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Teresa of Avila. (See below.)

Daily Office Lectionary Readings

AM Psalm 118:1-20; PM Psalm 118:21-50

Jonah 3:1-4:11; Acts 27:27-44; Luke 9:18-27

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 Lesson, Jonah 3:1-10, 4:1-11

3:1The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, 2"Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." 3So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. 4Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. 6When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. 8Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. 9Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish." 10When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

4:1But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. 2He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready

to relent from punishing. 3And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." 4And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

5 Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. 6The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. 7But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. 8When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live." 9But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." 10Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. 11And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

David's Reflections

When I feel indignant and angry about a matter of faith, should that not be a wake-up call? Jonah felt angry that Nineveh had repented and been spared divine judgment, even though he had been the preacher. He may well have felt trapped into preaching against his will. Then, his anger stirred over the loss of a shade bush. Just as God had spared the city, so God had blessed Jonah with shade and then taken it away. In this narrative, the preacher exhibits less spiritual sensitivity than the sailors, who reluctantly tossed him overboard, and his hearers in Assyria, who responded to his preaching.

God's question signaled Jonah that his anger indeed should have awakened him to introspection. "Is it right for you to be angry?" We may be angry about the prosperity of people who ignore God. We may be angry about losses suffered. We may be angry about injustices we endure. We may be angry about happenings beyond our control and opposite our desires. We may be angry over the presence in our church of people we feel don't belong there. In each case, that same question comes, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

If this text teaches us anything, it should convince us that God's love always will be more inclusive than ours. And, God's love always will mystify us. God

pointed out to Jonah that to destroy Nineveh would be to destroy the innocent with the guilty, an action God refused to take. Besides, anyone, even Assyrians, who turn to God will receive God's welcome.

And, what a picture of God's personal and caring nature this book presents. God continues to engage a surly and intemperate person in conversation, one who exhibits both profound insight and profound hardness. Do you not take comfort in that? Where is God engaging you in such conversation?

It is one thing to be angry over attacks on one's dignity and the violation of one's boundaries by another. It is one thing to be angry about God's inaction in matters of justice and mercy. The most common response in Scripture to God's inaction in defense of core values, like the suffering and oppression of the weak, takes the form of lament and questioning. (See Psalm 22; 77, for example.) It is another to be angry over an act of mercy and inclusion. (The parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 came in response to such anger.) In Jonah, there is no lament in chapters 3-4 (there is in the belly of the sea creature in chapter 2), no questioning, no dialogue initiated from Jonah's side. Jonah's anger arises because of an act of mercy and inclusion on God's part.

Sorting out our anger and taking it to God in dialogue and lament will provoke God's response. The question put to Jonah is a good one to live with for a day (or more), "Is it right for you to be angry?"

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 Teresa of Avila, reformer and contemplative. (died Oct 4, 1582) http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/Teresa_Avila.htm

Collect of the Feast of Teresa of Avila

O God, by your Holy Spirit you moved Teresa of Avila to manifest to your Church the way of perfection: Grant us, we pray, to be nourished by her teaching, and enkindle within us a keen and unquenchable longing for true holiness; through Jesus Christ, the joy of loving hearts, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Protection

O God, the life of all who live, the light of the faithful, the strength of those who labor, and the repose of the dead: We thank you for the blessings of the day that is past, and humbly ask for your protection through the coming night. Bring us in safety to the morning hours; through him who died and rose again for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (BCP, 124)

For the Parish

Almighty and everliving God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 817)

A Collect for the Presence of Christ

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. *Amen.* (BCP, 124)

A Collect for Mission

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 280, 515, 528, 540)