

Readings October 1, 2023

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

First Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? ³As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

²⁵Yet you say, "The way of the LORD is unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? ²⁶When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. ²⁷Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. ²⁸Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²⁹Yet the house of Israel says, "The way of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

³⁰Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. ³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16

¹Hear my teaching, ¹ O my people;
incline your ears to the words ¹ of my mouth.

²**I will open my mouth ¹ in a parable;**
I will declare the mysteries of ¹ ancient times—

³that which we have heard and known, and what our fore- ¹ bears have
told us,

we will not hide ¹ from their children.

⁴**We will recount to generations to come the praiseworthy deeds**
and the power ¹ of the LORD,

and the wonderful works ¹ God has done. R

¹²God worked marvels in the sight ¹ of their ancestors,
in the land of Egypt, in the ¹ field of Zoan,

¹³**splitting open the sea and letting ¹ them pass through;**
making the waters stand ¹ up like walls;

¹⁴leading them with a ¹ cloud by day,
and all the night with a ¹ glow of fire;

¹⁵**splitting the rocks ¹ in the wilderness**
and giving them drink as ¹ from the deep;

¹⁶bringing streams out ¹ of a rock,
making them flow down ¹ like a river. **R**

Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-13

“As you walk the road with the Chosen One, have you gained from him courage for the journey? Have you found comfort in his love? Do you share together in his Spirit? Has his tenderness and mercy captured your heart? ²If so, then have the same kind of thoughts. Love with one heart. Join together in one Spirit. And walk side by side on one path. This will make my heart leap for joy. ³But when you do these things, make sure you do them for the right reasons. Do not let selfish ways take you down a path of bragging or trying to look better than others. Instead, let humility be your guide as you honor others above yourself. ⁴Each of you should look to the needs of others, not just to your own.

⁵Think about yourselves in the same way Creator Sets Free (Jesus) the Chosen One thought about himself. ⁶Even though Creator Sets Free (Jesus) has always been the same as the Great Spirit and shared everything equally with him, he did not even think of holding on to this in a selfish way. ⁷“Instead, he emptied himself, became nothing, and gave up all he had. Then, having been born as a human being, he took on himself the lowly form of a servant. ⁸As a True Human Being, he lowered himself even more by following the guidance of the Great Spirit, even when death was waiting for him at the end of the trail, death on a tree-pole—the cross!

⁹Because Creator Sets Free (Jesus) did this, the Great Spirit gave him an honored place above all others and bestowed on him a name greater than all other names, ¹⁰so that all who live in the spirit-world above, on the earth below, and underneath the earth will bow their knee to Creator Sets Free (Jesus) in honor of his name. ¹¹Then everyone, in their native language, will shout out loud that Creator Sets Free (Jesus) the Chosen One is Grand Chief over all the earth. This will bring honor and praise to our Father the Great Spirit.

¹²My much-loved family, you have always followed my guidance, not only when I was with you but much more now that I am away. So then, with great respect, you must walk the path Creator has given you for being set free and made whole. ¹³For the Great Spirit is creating in you the desire and strength to do what pleases him.”

Gospel Reading: Matthew 21:23-32

²³When he arrived at the lodge, the head holy men were waiting for him. They and the ruling elders of the people came to him.

“By what right do you do these things?” they challenged. “Who gave you this right?”

²⁴“First you must answer one question from me,” he challenged back, “and then I will tell you what gives me the right. ²⁵The purification ceremony performed by Gift of Goodwill (John), was it from the spirit-world above, or did it come from human beings?”

They put their heads together and talked it over. “If we say it is from the spirit-world above, he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶But if we say it is from human beings, we fear what this crowd would do, for they are sure Gift of Goodwill (John) was a prophet.”

²⁷So they answered him, “We do not know.”

“So then,” Creator Sets Free (Jesus) said to them, “neither will I tell you what gives me the right to do these things.”

²⁸“How do you see it?” he asked them. “A man with two sons came to one of his sons and said, ‘Son, will you work in my vineyard today?’ ²⁹At first the son told him ‘No,’ but later changed his mind and went to work.

³⁰“Then the man went to his other son and asked him the same. He told his father, ‘Yes, I will,’ but never went.”

³¹Creator Sets Free (Jesus) looked right at the spiritual leaders and asked, “Which of the two sons did what his father wanted?”

They said to him, “The first one.”

“I speak truth from my heart,” he said to them, “tribal tax collectors and those who sell sexual favors will find their way onto Creator’s good road ahead of you! ³²Gift of Goodwill (John) came to show the good way, but you refused to hear him. You saw how the tribal tax collectors and those who sell sexual favors put their trust in him, but not even this changed your mind to believe him.”