

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS

In those days: The LORD said,

‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave; I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know.’

So the men turned from there and went towards Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.

Then Abraham drew near and said,

‘Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?’

And the LORD said,

‘If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.’

Abraham answered and said,

‘Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?’

And he said, ‘I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.’

Again he spoke to him and said, ‘Suppose forty are found there.’

He answered, ‘For the sake of forty I will not do it.’

Then he said, ‘Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak.

Suppose thirty are found there.'

He answered, 'I will not do it, if I find thirty there.'

He said, 'Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord.

Suppose twenty are found there.'

He answered, 'For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it.'

Then he said,

'Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there.'

He answered, 'For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.'

THE WORD OF THE LORD

THE RESPONSE TO THE PSALM IS:

On the day I called, you answered me, O Lord.

I thank you, LORD, with all my heart;
you have heard the words of my mouth.

In the presence of the angels I praise you.

I bow down towards your holy Temple.

On the day I called, you answered me, O Lord.

I give thanks to your name

for your merciful love and your faithfulness.

For you have exalted over all your name and your promise.

On the day I called, you answered me;
you increased the strength of my soul.

On the day I called, you answered me, O Lord.

The LORD is high, yet he looks on the lowly,
and the haughty he knows from afar.

You give me life though I walk amid affliction;
you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes.

On the day I called, you answered me, O Lord.

With your right hand you save me;
the LORD will accomplish this for me.

O LORD, your merciful love is eternal;
discard not the work of your hands.

On the day I called, you answered me, O Lord.

THE SECOND READING IS FROM THE LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

Brothers and Sisters:

You have been buried with Christ in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead.

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

THE WORD OF THE LORD.

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia.

You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons,
by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’

Alleluia.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’

And he said to them, ‘When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.’

And he said to them, ‘Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey and I have nothing to set before him”; and he will answer from within, “Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything”?’

I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, In our uneven world will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’

The Gospel of the Lord

THE REFLECTION

I think Mary Magdalen is a great Saint, devoted to Jesus and following him, trusted by his mother and by Jesus who appears to her first of all the witnesses to the resurrection. She had been healed by him and came from the town of Magdala beside the sea of Galilee. Her reputation was trashed by a Pope who decided she was a sinner as she had washed the feet of Jesus at Martha and Mary's house. The evidence is really missing to think it's the same woman. We are all interested in people and like to build up a full picture by talking about them and listening to others talk about them. We like to know, it may not be gossip if it is based on trying to find a full picture.

Today's readings fit together to provide a picture of what the Our Father means as a prayer. Luke's version tells us our prayers will be answered but perhaps not in the way our earthbound lives might like but because we will receive the Holy Spirit.

God's generosity and forgiveness is at the heart of the second reading; Jesus' sacrifice destroyed the debt of sin so that we can be judged as righteous in God's eyes unpunished for our faults. And through faith we will be raised as he was. God is always generous, even to sinners and we can ask for mercy.

The first reading is just after Abraham being hospitable to his guests unlike, I think, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, none of whom are righteous except Abraham's brother Lot and his wife and two daughters (that's just 4).

Prayer is a way to open ourselves to God, the full version of the Our Father that we know includes "Thy Will be done" – archaic English but unchangeable because that is the prayer all the English know and can say together, even if Anglicans add an extra bit. This means we have to accept God's will, in 19th century English 'Man proposes God disposes' encouraging us to be resilient. Luke's version indicates we will be helped by the Holy Spirit.

Prayers which are unanswered is the great test of faith that for some can break the hope they have in God's word. Human suffering seems so great. Prayer is a sign of solidarity and love, to wish good for another and to dispose us to help.