

Opening Prayer

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit that, as the Scriptures are read and discussed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27

^{1:1} After the death of Saul, when David had returned from defeating the Amalekites, David remained two days in Ziklag. ¹⁷ David intoned this lamentation over Saul and his son Jonathan. ¹⁸ (He ordered that The Song of the Bow be taught to the people of Judah; it is written in the Book of Jashar.) He said: ¹⁹ Your glory, O Israel, lies slain upon your high places! How the mighty have fallen! ²⁰ Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon; or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice, the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult. ²¹ You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor bounteous fields! For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, anointed with oil no more. ²² From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, nor the sword of Saul return empty. ²³ Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely! In life and in death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. ²⁴ O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you with crimson, in luxury, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel. ²⁵ How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan lies slain upon your high places. ²⁶ I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. ²⁷ How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

Commentary

2 Samuel opens in the dangerous and insecure period between the death of one king and the accession of another. Today's scripture focuses on David's reaction to hearing the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan and the defeat of the armies of Israel at the hands of the Philistines. David recalls the good that came to Israel through Saul and Jonathan. His final observation reflects the value of the loyal friendship of other persons as the firmest bond in the ancient world.

Reflection

What is the place of friendship in our world today? Name in your mind your best friends. What do those relationships mean to you? How do friendships begin and develop? How are they nurtured?

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

^{8:7} Now as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you--so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. ⁸ I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ¹⁰ And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something--¹¹ now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. ¹² For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has--not according to what one does not have. ¹³ I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between ¹⁴ your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. ¹⁵ As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."

Commentary

Paul, in this passage, assumes a different role from the usual evangelistic position he occupies in the early church. Here he is the administrator of an immense relief effort on behalf of the brothers and sisters in Judea. The faith of these believers in Jesus as Messiah had resulted in their being ostracized causing severe financial strain because people would not trade with them. So Paul collects a special offering for them—a relief fund, if you will. The distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christians would be replaced by the family of Christ caring for one another as brother and sister. Paul reminds the church of God’s provision of manna in the time of the exodus as a way of teaching that all we have is a gift of God and should be used for the good of all.

Reflection

What does this text say about our responsibility for each other in the larger Body of Christ? What does the passage suggest to you about the way we spend, buy, save, and give? Could Paul praise us for our “wealth of generosity” as he did the Macedonians.

Mark 5:21-43

^{5:21} When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." ²⁴ So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched

his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." ²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹ And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³² He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." ³⁵ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" ³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Commentary

This passage relates two healings: a 12-year old girl lying at death's door and a woman with a severe hemorrhage which had caused her suffering for 12 years. Jewish society regulated itself by Mosaic Law. Leviticus 15:25-31 is an example of how the law was used. Ritual purity was important in ancient society. Death was also seen as something of a curse showing the disfavor of God. Jesus is willing to touch the unclean and to enter into places regarded by the law as polluting and thus demonstrated God's deliverance in a powerful, tangible way. The touch of Jesus brings healing.

Reflection

Is "ritual purity" a concern in our world? Can you think of any barriers separating us from one another? What lines have you crossed to bring God's touch of love and healing to others? Read the hymn, "He Touched Me" (p. 367) and give thanks for the ways in which the hands of Jesus have reached out for you to make you whole and fully alive.

Responsive Psalter

From Psalm 130

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

² Lord, hear my voice!

**Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!**

³ If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴ **But there is forgiveness with you,
that you may be worshiped.**

⁵ I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;

⁶ **my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.**

⁷ O Israel, hope in the LORD!
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
with the Lord there is plenteous redemption.

⁸ **And the Lord will redeem Israel
from all iniquities.**

Closing Prayer

**Grant, O Lord, that what we have said with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and that what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**