

**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 23:1-7**

<sup>23:1</sup> Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favorite of the Strong One of Israel: <sup>2</sup> The spirit of the LORD speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue. <sup>3</sup> The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, <sup>4</sup> is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land. <sup>5</sup> Is not my house like this with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. Will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? <sup>6</sup> But the godless are all like thorns that are thrown away; for they cannot be picked up with the hand; <sup>7</sup> to touch them one uses an iron bar or the shaft of a spear. And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.

**Commentary**

This Sunday celebrates the Reign of Christ over all the world. The scriptures show Jesus as the one who fulfills the Old Testament messianic promises of the dynasty of David and yet changes the understanding of what God's king will be like and what he will do. The poem in 2 Samuel 23:1-7 is presented as David's last words and as appended to the narratives about King David and his family. Because most cultures believe dying persons are given special insight through their maturity and their proximity to death, these words carry extra weight. The poem is also understood as an oracle, an inspired prophetic utterance given to the speaker by God, who raised him up for a special purpose. The Davidic covenant represents an idealized picture of kingship. The king must rule over people "justly" and "in the fear of God." The actual story of David's life shows many times when he failed to live up to this ideal, yet he repented and maintained the image of a king who knew and obeyed God's law and thus deserved the adulation of his people and became a model and forebear of the Messiah. The placement of this poem at the end of Second Samuel show that David's abuses of power and family tragedies were not the last word. God would continue the work through David's heirs to secure justice in the land.

## Reflection

David is identified as someone who was lifted up by God's power for a special purpose. What is God's purpose for you? What will never happen in this world unless you do it?

## Revelation 1:4b-8

<sup>1:4b</sup> Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup> and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. <sup>7</sup> Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. <sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

## Commentary

The Revelation of John is an apocalypse containing letters to seven churches in Asia Minor that were experiencing severe persecution. Threatened with imprisonment and death, these Christians in crisis needed reassurance that God controlled history and that Christ, who had suffered, was victorious. The strong imagery and symbolic language of apocalyptic writing stirred the hearer's emotions and gave them comfort. The traditional greeting, like those in Paul's letters, conveys goodwill and blessing from God through John. God is named as "him who was and is to come," a phrase that echoes Exodus 3:14. "Who is to come" stresses God's future action of vanquishing evil and redeeming the faithful. The "seven spirits" around the throne were viewed as "guardian angels" for the seven churches. Our English word martyr is derived from the Greek word meaning "witness." The witness of Jesus in this passage encompasses death, resurrection, and sovereignty.

## Reflection

Recall a time of crisis in your life. How did God give you reassurance?

## John 18:33-37

<sup>18:33</sup> Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" <sup>35</sup> Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" <sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." <sup>37</sup> Pilate asked him, "So you

are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

### Commentary

During the great pilgrimage festivals such as Passover, when Jerusalem swelled to several times its normal population, the city seethed with anti-Roman sentiment. Into this highly charged atmosphere Jesus rode on a donkey, an action expected of the Messiah (Zechariah 9:9). The crowds met Jesus waving palm branches, a sign of Jewish nationalism. Hearing Jesus say that He would be "seated at the right hand of power," the Jewish authorities charged him with blasphemy (claiming power held only by God.) In a gesture to Rome, they brought Jesus to Pilate. The interrogation of Jesus took place inside the Praetorium, which included the governor's palace. The Jewish leaders waited outside so they would not be defiled by contact with Gentiles before the Passover feast. Pilate's back-and-forth movement between the Jewish leaders and Jesus illustrates the complex political situation. The high priest Caiaphas owed his job to Rome, and Pilate relied on the Jewish leaders to help keep order. Yet the Jews hated the Romans, and Pilate despised them. In their conversation, Jesus asserted that His authority came not from the coercive power of earthly rulers but from his relationship with God. By showing Jesus unafraid in his witness before Pilate, the Gospel writer strengthened the members of his community who were facing persecution for their testimony. Jesus said, those who "belong to the truth," who "listen to my voice," understand. This shows that Jesus would guard and guide His sheep in time of trouble.

### Reflection

Though US Christians rarely face situations of outright persecution, they may face resistance when taking a moral stand. What risks have you taken because of your faith? How has Christ strengthened you through those times?

### Responsive Psalter

### Psalm 132:1-12

- 132:1 O LORD, remember in David's favor  
all the hardships he endured;  
2 how he swore to the LORD  
and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,  
3 **"I will not enter my house  
or get into my bed;**  
4 I will not give sleep to my eyes  
or slumber to my eyelids,  
5 **until I find a place for the LORD,  
a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."**  
6 We heard of it in Ephrathah;

- we found it in the fields of Jaar.
- 7 **"Let us go to his dwelling place;  
let us worship at his footstool."**
- 8 Rise up, O LORD, and go to your resting place,  
you and the ark of your might.
- 9 **Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,  
and let your faithful shout for joy.**
- 10 For your servant David's sake  
**do not turn away the face of your anointed one.**
- 11 The LORD swore to David a sure oath  
from which he will not turn back:  
**"One of the sons of your body  
I will set on your throne.**
- 12 If your sons keep my covenant  
and my decrees that I shall teach them,  
**their sons also, forevermore,  
shall sit on your throne."**

### **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.**