

THE KEYS



Church of St. Peter the Apostle

Anglican Catholic Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic States

www.dmas-acc.org

The Rev. Canon Peter Geromel, OHI, DMin - Rector

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Fr Seeley's Corner

A Reflection on Nehemiah 8

This week in Morning Prayer we are reading from the book of Nehemiah. He was a Jewish scribe who was born in exile in Babylon during the Captivity; he had never seen his native land. King Nebuchadnezzar had taken the Jews into exile where they stayed for 80 years.

King Cyrus the Great the son of Nebuchadnezzar inherited a great kingdom and he cared for his subjects and was a mostly good king. Nehemiah was the cupbearer of King Cyrus, and when Nehemiah heard news of his homeland he was sorrowful. The king asked Nehemiah what was wrong, and when he heard Nehemiah's desire to see his homeland. King Cyrus saw this as an opportunity to expand his empire by turning Jerusalem into a tributary of his empire, so he sent Nehemiah, Ezra, and a group of Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and live there.

Ezra the priest, while the temple was being renovated and rebuilt, found a copy of the Book of the Law of the Lord in the temple ruins (I guess either they didn't have it in Babylon, or they had an incomplete copy.)

Anyway... Ezra brought it out and read it to the people: the story reads like this...

Nehemiah 8/5

And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the watergate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord. So they read the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

This made me think about the readings this morning.

The Jews assembled and heard the Law, and they rejoiced, because they knew how to please God. They knew that they were Jews and that the Law had been given to them as a special people. And here they were glad hearing the Law

We are not Jews who have a law which micromanages our lives. We have the Summary of the Law, which you know very well.

But we're like the Jews in that every Sunday we gather to hear the theology of the Church.

So what is our theology?

That Jesus became man and died on the cross for our sins. That he made thereby a full perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and did institute, and in his holy gospel did command us to make a perpetual memory of his death and sacrifice.

That we, offering this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, might eat of his flesh and drink of his blood unto the remission of our sins.

And we, thus washed of sin, might offer him ourselves, soul and body: a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice.

- Reasonable because we know and intend to offer ourselves, unlike the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament.
- Holy, because through faith in Christ our sacrifices are made holy
- Living, because unlike the animals of the Old Testament, we remain alive while we offer our sacrifices.

Through faith, and the sacraments, our relationship with God is fundamentally transformed, that rather than living in a state of punishment and shame in our fallen natures, we are instead reconciled to God through the flesh of Jesus. Our sinful natures are no longer our shame, but our strength; we are not only able to please God, but made priests unto God and can offer to God spiritual sacrifices pleasing unto Him, like the priest of the Old Testament, and can furthermore forgive our neighbour like as God has forgiven us.

This is a happy state! We do not live under the punishment of Adam any longer. We live in a new, different relationship with God. We are not under a law which convicts us of sin, but in a state of harmony through Jesus, who took on our flesh and reconciled us to God by his own body on the cross.

And what is the reward for following Christ and carrying our crosses? Mercy, love and peace: overflowing our cup and into our bosom. When we show our neighbour the love of God in Jesus Christ, we can expect love in return, plus the grace of God overflowing in our souls.

But wait! What if we love our neighbour and they do not love us in return? I am sure we have all experienced that. There are two ways of loving someone... any parent can tell you that.

You can love them and see their love in return,

Or you can love them as an example, and pray that your love makes an impression on them, and that they learn their lesson.

Like Jesus says: if you only love those who love you back, what reward is there in that?

The love we seek is that of Jesus.

He told us that if we want to love him we should start with our neighbour, but that ultimately He and the Father and the Holy Ghost would come to us and dwell with us. It's that interior garden that we seek to cultivate with the Trinity.

So love God, and love your neighbour. Remember that you have your sins forgiven by the death and resurrection of Jesus; and take pleasure in hearing what God has done for you. It helps you remember what benefits you have over the rest of humanity who do not know Jesus and his gospel: like the Jews who listened and learned the Law of God. We have the theology of Jesus; a clear understanding of the situation of mankind under the law of love that Jesus preached.

Today is a day of celebration. Do not mourn or be sorrowful. Cast aside the cares of the world. Eat, drink, and share with him who has none that all might be joyful.

For we this day hear the word of God, we hear the theology of the church, and we rejoice in that knowledge, that salvation has come and that we are members and partakers in the salvation.

And that we, through faith, can expect to have the abundance of Christ as our portion.

So forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.

News and Information

July 14th, Solemn Evensong and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

July 17th, Vestry at 7:30 pm, Mass at 7 pm.

July 21st, Celtic Evensong at 6 pm. Evening Prayer from the Irish Prayer Book of 1926, with preaching on a Celtic Saint and Celtic Hymns.

July 25th, Mass for St. James' Day 12 Noon.

Going forward, we plan to have Solemn Evensong and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on First Sundays at 6 pm – with Reception of Holy Communion for those who did not receive earlier. And we plan to have Celtic Evensong – with Reception of Holy Communion as well – on Third Sundays. This will be from the Irish Prayer Book of 1926 with Celtic Hymns and Preaching on a Celtic Saint.

JULY, 2024						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4] 12 noon HC	[5]	[6]
[7] 8:00 a.m. MP 10:00 a.m. MP TRINITY VI	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11] 12 noon HC	[12]	[13]
[14] 8:00 a.m. MP 10:00 a.m. MP 6:00 p.m. Evensong & Benediction TRINITY VII	[15]	[16]	[17] 7:00 p.m. HC 7:30 p.m. Vestry	[18] 12 noon HC	[19]	[20]
[21] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE, SS 6:00 p.m. Celtic Evensong TRINITY VIII	[22]	[23]	[24]	[25] 12 noon HC ST. JAMES	[26]	[27]
[28] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE, SS 6:00 p.m. EP TRINITY IX	[29]	[30]	[31]	LEGEND: HC - Holy Communion; FHE – Festal Holy Eucharist; HE - Holy Eucharist; SS – Sunday School; PG - Prayer Group; EP – Evening Prayer; MP – Morning Prayer; P&HU – Prayers and Holy Unction		

IN THE LORD'S SERVICE

If you cannot fulfill your assigned duty because of an urgent reason, PLEASE SECURE A REPLACEMENT.

	July 7	July 14	July 21	July 28	August 4
Coffee Hour	L. Olver	B. Von Claparede	M. Slayton	E. Paisley	C. Pappas
Epistoler 8 a.m.	J. Omwake	D. Drysdale	G. Mauney	C. Von Claparede	G. Mauney
Epistoler 10 a.m.	T. Paisley	T. Paisley	G. Terrell	P. Williams	T. Paisley

Altar servers and ushers will be assigned as available before each service.

2024 Vestry (term end): George Mauney ('25), Lisa Olver ('24), Ted Paisley ('24), Mike Slayton ('25), George Terrell ('26), Vicki Williams ('26)