

	<i>March 13 2022: The Second Sunday in Lent</i>	
	Luke 13: 31-35	
	<i>'The Great Hallel' - Michael Brown</i>	

'Praise the Lord, ye servants: O praise the Name of the Lord' (Psalm 113: 1 BCP)

Opening Hymn/Psalm

<i>'Give thanks to God, for he is good' - Based on Psalm 118</i>	
<p>1. Give thanks to God, for he is good, the everlasting Giver: let all his people praise the Lord whose love endures for ever. For his right hand has made me strong; I am his new creation: he is my God, he is my song, my strength and my salvation.</p>	<p>3. The Lord has made his light to shine on all our dark depression; from east to west, believers join his victory procession. O save us, Lord: give us success! Your gifts flow like a river; O bless us, God whose name we bless! Your love endures for ever.</p>
<p>Words: © Christopher Idle/Jubilate Hymns Ltd Tune: 'Golden Sheaves' Arthur Sullivan e.g. 'To Thee, O Lord our hearts we raise In hymns of adoration' (NEH 261).</p>	

Today's Gospel Reading.....

.....may only be a short episode in the life of our Lord as told by Luke but it is unique in that it is not found in Matthew or in Luke. This passage touches on two themes: Temptation; Worship.

Jesus is Tempted (Again)

In his sermon last week, Fr Mike wrote about the temptations Jesus faced in the Wilderness. He reminded us that these spiritual attacks on Jesus only went away ‘until the next time’. Sure enough, the opening verse of today’s Gospel shows Jesus being tempted again. And like many temptations, it appears harmless enough at first.

‘Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.’ Sounds like a friendly warning. *‘Go and tell that fox for me,...*’. Not exactly a grateful reply by Jesus! ‘Fox’ was a standard term of abuse to describe a sly or cunning person. But the anger behind this reply isn’t really directed at Herod. Jesus is actually rebuking the people (‘some Pharisees’) who are pretending to help him. In the wilderness the devil tempted Jesus to worship him and not God. This time Jesus is being tempted to worship fear. That is, the fear of what fate may be waiting for him in Jerusalem and thus abandon his obedience to God.

And so the implication of these words *‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem’*. is simply ‘Go away. You are not going to tempt me away from what I am doing and what I am going to do’.

Jesus speaks about Worship

‘Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.’. These words from Psalm 118 are familiar to us from their regular use in the BCP service of Holy Communion. For anyone who heard Jesus speak these words, they would remind them of a special act of Jewish worship. At festival feasts in the family home, Psalms 113-118 would be recited or sung from beginning to end. This act of worship was known as the ‘Great Hallel’ because of the number of times in them God is praised (‘Hail’, Hallelujah’). And they would have been used in praise by Jesus and his disciples at the Passover.

How was this act of worship organised?

In principle everyone present was supposed to recite all six of the psalms on their own behalf. Obviously not everyone would either be able to read or would know the words by heart. In which case, and surely a common occurrence, some suitable person would lead the worship. This person would likely be an ‘elder’ of some standing amongst the group, or the head of the household or someone else who could manage the task. The leader would read out or sing the first verse of the psalm and the rest of the group would repeat it. After that, the leader would continue but everyone else would respond with a ‘Hallelujah’; hence the name ‘Great Hallel’.

Two Interesting Points

- Notice how every effort is made for the members of the household, whatever their age or ability, to take part in the worship of the whole group. (There are more complicated rules in effect permitting anyone who could to lead the worship.)
- It was held that anyone who attended and followed to the best of their ability, even if they couldn’t manage a response of any kind, had fulfilled their duty.

Looking ahead to the end of Lent.....

.....it seems likely that the verse ‘*And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives*’ in Mark and the identical version in Matthew, is referring to this singing of Psalms 113-118. After the Resurrection, the disciples must surely have done their best to recall every detail of the celebration we call the Last Supper. And as with so many events in his ministry, they will also have seen in a new light what Jesus said during his journey to Jerusalem.

And now, a hymn to remind us of goal of the christian life: ‘*City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*’ (Hebrews 12: 22)

Final Hymn

‘Jerusalem the Golden’ (from Hymns A&M Revised)

1 Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation
Sink heart and voice opprest,
I know not, O, I know not
What joys await us there,
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare.

4 O sweet and blessèd country,
The home of God’s elect!
O sweet and blessèd country,
That eager hearts expect!
Jesu, in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest;
Who art, with God the Father
And Spirit ever blessed.

Words: Bernard of Cluny, translated by J M Neale and others.

Epilogue: A Picture of the Power of Faith



‘...in this beleaguered capital, the bells still ring out, reassuringly on the hour, in the magnificent golden-domed St Michael’s Cathedral. It knows a thing or two about war. Sacked down the centuries, demolished by the Soviet authorities in the 1930’s during Stalin’s rule. But it rose again. And now in 2022 Ukrainians draw strength from this building...’

Lyse Doucet, BBC Chief International Correspondent, Kiev, 16:31 05 March 2022.