

FIRST READING: Isaiah 66:10-14c

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah:

Thus says the LORD: Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her, all you who love her; exult, exult with her, all you who were mourning over her! Oh, that you may suck fully of the milk of her comfort, that you may nurse with delight at her abundant breasts! For thus says the LORD: Lo, I will spread prosperity over Jerusalem like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent. As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap; as a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort. When you see this, your heart shall rejoice and your bodies flourish like the grass; the LORD's power shall be known to his servants.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 66:1-3,4-5,6-7, 16, 20

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth, sing praise to the glory of his name; proclaim his glorious praise. Say to God, How tremendous are your deeds!

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

"Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you, sing praise to your name! Come and see the works of God, his tremendous deeds among the children of Adam.

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

He has changed the sea into dry land; through the river they passed on foot; therefore let us rejoice in him. He rules by his might forever.

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare what he has done for me. Blessed be God who refused me not my prayer or his kindness!

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

SECOND READING: Galatians 6:14-18

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians:

Brothers and sisters: May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation. Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule and to the Israel of God. From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL: Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:

At that time the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.' Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.' Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand. I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town. The seventy-two returned rejoicing, and said, "Lord, even the

demons are subject to us because of your name. Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky. Behold, I have given you the power to 'tread upon serpents' and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

The Gospel of the Lord

Reflection for the 14th Sunday of the Year C

Today's reading from Isaiah is from the final chapter of the book. The author of these words is not the original Isaiah. There are three separate and distinct authors of the book of Isaiah. They differ in style of writing, content and emotion. There is the original prophet Isaiah who wrote chapters 1-39. Second Isaiah wrote chapters 40-55. Third Isaiah completed the book from chapters 56-66. Isaiah wrote from the period before Jerusalem's collapse into the early portion of the Jewish captivity. His themes were of repentance and God's judgment. He also promised God's restoration of Jerusalem. Second Isaiah's main theme stated that God's judgment had taken place. Reconciliation between God and God's people had begun and would lead to the restoration of Jerusalem. Third Isaiah spoke of the immanent restoration of God's people to the Promised Land.

Isaiah portrays God's love for God's people as a mother's love. Suckling and fondling of an infant is a sensual and powerful image with which to portray the manifestation of God's love. This is not a common biblical image to describe God's comforting and healing grace. Isaiah has said that we will see this happen. When we witness this, our hearts will rejoice and our bodies will flourish like the grass. This is a promise that we all need to hear as our three parishes have closed. In our context, we will know God's abundance and witness life in a new and yet unnamed parish.

We hold, by faith, that the scriptures are the living and effective Word of God. The prophet did not just speak to his contemporaries. He speaks the living Word to us, through the centuries, to heal us, give us strength for the work we have to do and to establish our new home as God's chosen people through faith. For the people of Isaiah's time, the restoration of Jerusalem and its people was immanent, perhaps happening already. We are in the process of restoration right now. This is an exciting connection between past and present; God's chosen people and us, the people of God in Christ.

Let all the earth cry out; with joy. Crime and murder in our streets, hoards of displaced people because of invasions, insurrections, famine, and drug lords' violence; our world and its people cry out! Global warming, wild fires, COVID's raging, earthquakes, storms and natural disasters; the world's in pain! Even as our three parishes have closed and we cry out in grief, how can there be joy in all this destruction, pain and human suffering? A good question. There is no real answer to it either; or at least none from any of us. Yet God provides. Sometimes we need to search and discern what God provides.

We live, love and believe. How? These are God's gifts to us. With these gifts we can catch glimpses of God's working among us. When our loved ones may die after long term suffering, can we feel joy as God has called them home? Can we rejoice that their suffering is over and their pain has ceased? Perhaps we can. Grieving and feeling joy are not mutually exclusive because of one gift that God as the infinite, eternal and unconditional lover of our souls gives

us; hope. As long as we gather in Jesus' name, God is through, with, in and among us. In God's presence, we are holy. This is the source of our healing which leads to our joy. The result of offering our grief to God is the joy of God's presence.

We may have gotten extra credit in grammar school for the extra work we did. But there is no extra credit with our salvation. God has saved us once and for all in the cross of Jesus; his passion, death and resurrection. Nothing can add to God's gift of new life. Each of us, every human being, is God's beloved child and a sibling of Jesus. There is no higher place than to be in the presence of the Lord. This is what Paul has said today. We are in God's presence always. Jesus had promised, "I will be with you always, to the end of time." (Matthew 28:20 Revised English Bible) Not only is Jesus with us as we merge into our new community, we are present to each other too. These two experiences also come from Jesus' words in the gospel, "For where two or three meet together in my name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:20 Revised English Bible)

When we approach the gospel, we know certain things. We know of the twelve apostles also called disciples. There's a difference in the significance of the two names. A disciple is a follower and student of a teacher. The word rabbi means teacher. A disciple may eventually become a teacher too but never replace their original leader. An apostle is one sent out on a mission. The twelve were first disciples until their first mission. Then they became apostles. A good name, in our contemporary world, for apostle is missionary.

These seventy two people are, by definition having been sent out on a mission, apostles. We have no idea of their names for, as we've just read, Matthew hasn't named them. We know nothing about them other than what Matthew has told us. They completed their mission elated by what they accomplished and by their success. They discovered their gifts and their voices. They experienced the power of God that flowed through them and felt the power themselves. Jesus knew that this elation was misleading. He redirected their excitement back to God and God's kingdom.

This reminded me of a Native American proverb someone thoughtfully gave me, which I take to heart. "The smarter a person is, the more he needs God to protect him from thinking he knows everything." Could this reality be what Jesus intended for the seventy two to know? God was the source of their faith and abilities and the origin of their mission, message and work. The thrill of their success was not the goal of their work. God had more plans in store for them and the people they had served. The cross and resurrection lay in store for Jesus. The Spirit would fill the disciples and apostles after Jesus returned to the Father. They had only begun what we still live today; Jesus' mission to spread the Word to the ends of the earth and to preach the gospel to all people.

We, the members of our new and yet unnamed parish, have embarked on a mission not unlike the seventy two. The Spirit has prepared to form a new community in Christ as our spiritual home. We are preparing a new parish for the greater honor and glory of God as we serve one another in Jesus' name. We rejoice in this task for it shows by our witness to faith that we serve our God in faith as we build Jesus Church. Our new parish is a new step to usher in the Kingdom of God.

May the mission of Jesus continue through us through the providence of the Holy Spirit.

James D. Beath

July 2-3, 2022