

FIRST READING: Sirach 48:1-14

A reading from the Book of Sirach:

Like a fire there appeared the prophet Elijah whose words were as a flaming furnace. Their staff of bread he shattered, in his zeal he reduced them to straits; By the Lord's word he shut up the heavens and three times brought down fire. How awesome are you, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds! Whose glory is equal to yours? You brought a dead man back to life from the nether world, by the will of the LORD. You sent kings down to destruction, and easily broke their power into pieces. You brought down nobles, from their beds of sickness. You heard threats at Sinai, at Horeb avenging judgments. You anointed kings who should inflict vengeance, and a prophet as your successor. You were taken aloft in a whirlwind of fire, in a chariot with fiery horses. You were destined, it is written, in time to come to put an end to wrath before the day of the LORD, To turn back the hearts of fathers toward their sons, and to re-establish the tribes of Jacob. Blessed is he who shall have seen you And who falls asleep in your friendship. For we live only in our life, but after death our name will not be such. O Elijah, enveloped in the whirlwind! Then Elisha, filled with the twofold portion of his spirit, wrought many marvels by his mere word. During his lifetime he feared no one, nor was any man able to intimidate his will. Nothing was beyond his power; beneath him flesh was brought back into life. In life he performed wonders, and after death, marvelous deeds.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 97:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7

***Rejoice in the Lord, you just!***

The LORD is king; let the earth rejoice; let the many isles be glad. Clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the foundation of his throne.

***Rejoice in the Lord, you just!***

Fire goes before him and consumes his foes round about. His lightnings illumine the world; the earth sees and trembles.

***Rejoice in the Lord, you just!***

The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim his justice, and all peoples see his glory.

***Rejoice in the Lord, you just!***

All who worship graven things are put to shame, who glory in the things of nought; all gods are prostrate before him.

***Rejoice in the Lord, you just!***

Gospel: Matthew 6:7-15

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

Jesus said to his disciples: "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. "This is how you are to pray: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day

our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' "If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions."

The Gospel of the Lord.

### **Reflection for the 11<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the Year**

I imagine if Elijah, himself, were to hear Jesus Ben Sirach's telling of the prophet's life like this, he'd spin like the wheels of the fiery chariot that whisked him from this world to God's bosom. Elijah always intended and worked for the glory of God. He was never God's prophet to show off his own power. He did these things all because of God's infinite, eternal and unconditional love. As a eulogy, Sirach wrote this to praise the memory of God's prophet. As we read it, we know that Elijah was merely faithful to his call and mission as the one whom God sent. Elijah's deeds proclaimed God's Word and gave witness to God's abiding care. To Sirach, Elijah was a hero who did great things. To Elijah, he was himself God's prophet and his works were God's glory and power.

"Rejoice in the Lord, you just!" Whenever I hear the word "just" in scripture, I must ask, "Who is just?" We're all just people. I like the play on words. Only God is just. A better word I like to use in place of "just" is "justified," having borrowed the word from Paul. In Jesus God has shared God's justice with us. God's justice is always forgiveness. In our human nature we have a tendency to sin. When we turn to God as sinners, God always forgives. This is why the gospel of Jesus is called the good news. Iles, of course, can never be glad, but the people who live on them can.

We all know the Prayer of Jesus and rattle it off with ease. I can recite it in Spanish and Latin, too, and while I studied gospel Greek I learned to read it in the language that Matthew wrote. Many are surprised that there's another in the Christian Scriptures that is found in Luke. It is not exactly the same.

"Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test."

When we pray the Matthew version do we listen to our words? Don't our prayers often say, "My will be done; my kingdom come?" Do we really try to do what God wants? When we mention "Our daily bread," do we mean give us what we want or give us what we need? Jesus is pretty clear that for God to forgive us we must forgive others. Approaching this we can remember that Jesus has already forgiven us through his cross and resurrection. Faith in God and in Jesus is the only thing we need to have received it. Faith is a gift from God. We have all we need to forgive others; these gifts of God, we can share.

We don't pray for God to lead us away from sin, just temptation. What truly tempts us? Don't we always face what tempts us like moths to a flame? The more we try to resist them, the more power and momentum we give them. We don't need obsessions with that which tempts us. So, what else can we do? I do this. I visualize Jesus to stand between me and my temptation. Who can sin when in Jesus presence? That always helps. I can rely on Jesus strength in those

moments for I can only fight for a while. His strength is eternal. Even with that, I fail. Since God's justice is forgiveness. God is just a thought way.

May God guide our thoughts, steps and actions.

James D. Beath

June 16, 2022