

PENTECOST 23

Proper 28 - Year C

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Jeremiah 65:17-25

¹⁷ For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating,
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy
and its people as a delight.
¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it
or the cry of distress.
²⁰ No more shall there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime,
for one who dies at a hundred years will be
considered a youth,
and one who falls short of a hundred will be
considered accursed.
²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
²² They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat,
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people
be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their
hands.
²³ They shall not labor in vain
or bear children for calamity,
for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—
and their descendants as well.
²⁴ Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.
²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together;
the lion shall eat straw like the ox,
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the Lord.

not be remembered or come to mind.” The prophet is not describing an escape from the world but rather the renewal of it. Jerusalem, so often marked by conquest and grief, is re-imagined as a place of delight, safety, and peace. Here, joy replaces weeping, stability replaces exploitation, and longevity replaces untimely death.

This passage redefines prosperity not as wealth or military dominance, but as security and well-being, rooted in justice. People will live in the homes they build and eat from the vineyards they plant—an intentional reversal of the exploitation described earlier in Isaiah, where invaders and elites consumed the fruits of others’ labor. The promise is not only personal but communal; God is remaking the entire social fabric to reflect divine justice.

The imagery of natural enemies coexisting—the wolf and lamb feeding together, the lion eating straw like the ox—signals harmony that extends even to creation itself. The violence embedded in human systems is undone in the very patterns of nature. God’s renewal touches every layer of existence, from daily survival to cosmic order.

For Christians, this vision resonates with the eschatological hope of Revelation, where God dwells with the people and death is no more. Yet Isaiah’s promise is not limited to the end times; it is a word of encouragement for those living in despair. God is still creating, still bringing life where there has been loss, still reordering reality toward joy.

Discussion Questions

Isaiah imagines a world where the vulnerable flourish and even natural enemies live in peace. How does this vision challenge our current assumptions about justice and peace?

In what ways might Christians live into this vision now, embodying glimpses of the “new creation” in our communities?

Commentary from Quincy Hall

Isaiah’s vision is sweeping in scope: God declares the creation of “new heavens and a new earth,” a transformation so radical that “the former things shall

Canticle 9

Surely, it is God who saves me; *
I will trust in him and not be afraid.
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, *
and he will be my Savior.
Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing *
from the springs of salvation.
And on that day you shall say, *
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his
Name;
Make his deeds known among the peoples; *
see that they remember that his Name is
exalted.
Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great
things, *
and this is known in all the world.
Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy, *
for the great one in the midst of you is the
Holy One of Israel.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy
Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be
for ever. Amen.

Commentary from Quincy Hall

Canticle 9 is a hymn of confidence and thanksgiving that springs from God's deliverance. It begins with the bold claim, "Surely, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid." This is not abstract assurance but hard-won trust, born out of God's faithfulness in times of distress. It reframes fear into confidence, not because of human strength, but because of divine constancy.

The image of "draw[ing] water... from the springs of salvation" is striking; in a land where water is precious, this metaphor conveys God's abundance and refreshment. Salvation is not a one-time rescue but a wellspring continually available for renewal. Just as water sustains life, so God's saving presence sustains the faithful.

The canticle moves from personal affirmation to communal proclamation: God's deeds are to be made known among the nations. Praise becomes testimony, and joy becomes mission. Singing and shouting for joy are not private devotions but public witness that the Holy One is active and near.

Placed in the lectionary alongside Isaiah's vision of new creation and Jesus' words about endurance, Canticle 9 underscores that salvation is both present and future. It is a reminder that joy is not naïve optimism but a posture of trust that God is at work, even when circumstances remain difficult.

Discussion Questions

What does the image of salvation as springs of water suggest about God's role in sustaining us daily?

How might public praise and testimony of God's deeds shape the witness of a congregation today?

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

⁶Now we command you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother or sister living irresponsibly and not according to the tradition that they received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not irresponsible when we were with you, ⁸and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day so that we might not burden any of you. ⁹This was not because we do not have that right but in order to give you an example to imitate. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: anyone unwilling to work should not eat. ¹¹For we hear that some of you are living irresponsibly, mere busybodies, not doing any work. ¹²Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. ¹³Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

Commentary from Quincy Hall

Paul addresses a practical and theological concern in Thessalonica: some in the community, convinced of Christ's imminent return, have ceased working and instead rely on others to support them. Paul counters this behavior with both teaching and example. He recalls that he and his companions worked "night and day" so as not to burden anyone, modeling self-sufficiency and mutual respect.

The stern phrase "anyone unwilling to work should not eat" must be understood in context. Paul is not dismissing the poor, the sick, or those genuinely unable to provide for themselves. Rather, he warns against those who exploit communal generosity by choosing idleness. For Paul, Christian community is sustained by mutual responsibility: the strong support the weak, but each person contributes as they are able.

This teaching holds tension with our modern context, where "work" is often tied to economic productivity and worth. Paul's concern is not with capitalist efficiency but with maintaining a community that embodies fairness, dignity, and care. The call to avoid idleness is as much about protecting the vulnerable from exploitation as it is about instilling discipline.

The closing admonition, "do not be weary in doing what is right," broadens the command beyond labor. It is an encouragement to persist in the life of faith, in service, and in justice—even when it is tiring or when others take advantage. Christian life is about shared responsibility, accountability, and perseverance in the common good.

Discussion Questions

How can communities of faith balance grace for those in need with accountability for those unwilling to contribute?

What might not growing "weary in doing what is right" look like in the life of a congregation or in your own discipleship?

Luke 21:5-19

⁵When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, ⁶“As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

⁷They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” ⁸And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray, for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them.

⁹“When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified, for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” ¹⁰Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues, and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

¹²“But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance, ¹⁵for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents and siblings, by relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your souls.

Commentary from Quincy Hall

The disciples admire the grandeur of the Jerusalem Temple, but Jesus unsettles them by predicting its destruction. His words would have been shocking: the Temple was not just a building but the center of identity, worship, and national pride. By foretelling its ruin, Jesus reframes where God’s presence and authority truly dwell.

He goes on to describe wars, natural disasters, and persecutions. These are not signs of God’s absence, but the backdrop against which faith is tested and revealed. Discipleship will mean betrayal by family, arrest by authorities, and public hostility. Yet Jesus insists these trials are opportunities for testimony. The Spirit will give his followers words and wisdom, ensuring that their witness is not in vain.

The promise “not a hair of your head will perish” is not a denial of suffering but an assurance of God’s ultimate care. Even amid violence and loss, God’s purposes endure. The call is not to predict timetables or panic over crises but to endure with faith, trusting that God’s kingdom is larger than the world’s turmoil.

For modern readers, this passage resonates in times of upheaval and conflict. Jesus does not promise safety from struggle but equips his followers with presence, wisdom, and courage. Endurance becomes the mark of discipleship—not passive waiting, but active, faithful perseverance.

Discussion Questions

How does Jesus transform the disciples’ fear of destruction into a call to witness?

What might endurance in faith look like in our current context of social, political, or personal turmoil?