

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany, Year B

The Collect:

O Lord, you have taught us that without love whatever we do is worth nothing: Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts your greatest gift, which is love, the true bond of peace and of all virtue, without which whoever lives is accounted dead before you. Grant this for the sake of your only Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Lesson: Isaiah 43:18-25

¹⁸ Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
²⁰ The wild animals will honour me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
²¹ the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.
²² Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob;
but you have been weary of me, O Israel!
²³ You have not brought me your sheep for burnt-offerings,
or honoured me with your sacrifices.
I have not burdened you with offerings,
or wearied you with frankincense.
²⁴ You have not bought me sweet cane with money,
or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices.
But you have burdened me with your sins;
you have wearied me with your iniquities.

²⁵ I, I am He
who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,
and I will not remember your sins.

Psalm: Psalm 41

¹ Happy are they who consider the poor and needy! *
the Lord will deliver them in the time of trouble.
² The Lord preserves them and keeps them alive,
so that they may be happy in the land; *
he does not hand them over to the will of their enemies.
³ The Lord sustains them on their sickbed *
and ministers to them in their illness.
⁴ I said, "Lord, be merciful to me; *
heal me, for I have sinned against you."
⁵ My enemies are saying wicked things about me: *
"When will he die, and his name perish?"
⁶ Even if they come to see me, they speak empty words; *
their heart collects false rumors;
they go outside and spread them.
⁷ All my enemies whisper together about me *
and devise evil against me.
⁸ "A deadly thing," they say, "has fastened on him; *
he has taken to his bed and will never get up again."
⁹ Even my best friend, whom I trusted,
who broke bread with me, *
has lifted up his heel and turned against me.
¹⁰ But you, O Lord, be merciful to me and raise me up, *
and I shall repay them.
¹¹ By this I know you are pleased with me, *
that my enemy does not triumph over me.
¹² In my integrity you hold me fast, *
and shall set me before your face for ever.
¹³ Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, *
from age to age. Amen. Amen.

Second Lesson: 2 Corinthians 1:18-22

¹⁸As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been ‘Yes and No.’ ¹⁹For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not ‘Yes and No’; but in him it is always ‘Yes.’ ²⁰For in him every one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes.’ For this reason it is through him that we say the ‘Amen’, to the glory of God. ²¹But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, ²²by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first instalment.

Gospel: Mark 2:1-12

¹When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. ³Then some people came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. ⁴And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷‘Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ ⁸At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, ‘Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven”, or to say, “Stand up and take your mat and walk”? ¹⁰But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹‘I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.’ ¹²And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’

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