LECTIONARY FOR THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

Morning Evening

The Third Sunday in Lent, Mar. 7

1st Lesson Genesis 37 Genesis 39

2nd Lesson Matthew 18:1–14 2 Corinthians 5:20–7:1

Monday, Mar. 8

1st Lesson Exodus 12:37—end Exodus 13:1--16

2nd Lesson John 4:27—end Ephesians 3

Tuesday, Mar. 9

1st Lesson Exodus 13:17--14:14 Exodus 14:15--end

2nd Lesson John 5:1–23 Ephesians 4:1--16

Wednesday, Mar. 10

1st Lesson Exodus 15:1–26 Exodus 15: 27–16:35

2nd Lesson John 5:24—end Ephesians 4:17--30

Thursday, Mar. 11

1st Lesson Exodus 17 Exodus 18

2nd Lesson John 6:1–21 Ephesians 4:31–5:21

Fiday, Mar. 12

1st Lesson Exodus 19 Exodus 20:1--21

2nd  Lesson John 6:22–40 Ephesians 5:22–6:9

Saturday, Mar. 13

1st Lesson Exodus 22:20–23:17 Exodus 23:18--end

2nd Lesson John 6:41—end Ephesians 6: 19--end

The Fourth Sunday in Lent, Mar. 14

1st Lesson Genesis 43 Genesis 44

2nd Lesson Luke 15 Mark 15:1–21

LENT III

In today’s Epistle St.Paul is exhorting us to a distinct lifestyle and a moral standard based on the life but even more on the death of Jesus Christ. The final verse of Ephesians 4, just before the Prayer Book selection breaks in, “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” That free and total pardon is grounded on the event of the Cross where Christ died for us.

In Eph. 5:2 in our reading, Paul tells us that “Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.” Because the term sacrifice occurs so frequently in our Prayer Book, (three times in the Prayer of Consecration), it seems strange that Paul hardly ever used this word to describe our Saviour’s death. The Epistle to the Hebrews, which Paul did not write, is where the themes of sacrifice and priesthood are explored in great depth.

For those present on Calvary on the afternoon when our dear Lord was crucified, it hardly looked like a liturgical event. Someone has written that Jesus did not die on an altar between two candles but on a garbage dump between two thieves. The execution of Jesus bore little resemblance to the elaborate ceremonies which were going on at the same time in the temple, in which lambs and bulls were slaughtered and their roasted flesh ritually distributed for reverent consumption. Yes, there were priests present on Calvary, not to offer sacrifice, but just to make sure Pilate did not change his mind.

Perhaps it was Paul who was the first to see the grim and cruel judicial murder of “this innocent man” (Pilate’s words) as a sacrifice offered to God to satisfy the divine justice and reconcile us to God. We recall Paul’s outburst, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast.” This is a powerful aspect of the Gospel which we will soon explore again in Passiontide and Holy Week.

But Paul’s point is that the death of Christ is the ultimate demonstration of his love for us. He loved us not because we deserved His love; in fact, we deserved the very opposite. “My song is love unknown, my Saviour’s love to me. Love to the loveless shown, that we might lovely be.” The love of Christ for sinners, for prodigal sons, for faithless disciples, is a love we have no words to describe. The hymn-writers keep using the word “amazing.”

That amazing, self-sacrificing love, demonstrated on Calvary, was exactly the pattern Paul urges on us. “Be ye therefore followers of God, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” The Christian loves those who do not and perhaps cannot love him in return. This is the love exhibited on the Cross. LKW