

7/4/2010

THE PSALM AND THE CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 20

Lay Minister: Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1781, "God who gave us life and liberty. And can the

liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the Gift of God? That they are not to be violated with His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever."

Lay Minister: 1 May the LORD answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God

of Jacob protect you.

People: 2 May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from

Zion.

Lay Minister: 3 May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings.

People: 4 May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed.

Lay Minister: 5 We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the

name of our God. May the LORD grant all your requests.

People: 6 Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he answers him from his

holy heaven with the saving power of his right hand.

Lay Minister: 7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses,

People: but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

Lay Minister: 8 They are brought to their knees and fall,

People: but we rise up and stand firm.

Lay Minister: 9 O LORD, save the king!

People: Answer us when we call!

Lay Minister: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

People: Amen.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Lord God almighty, "whose eyes keep watch on the nations," (*Psalm 66:7b*) give to the leaders and all citizens of our country a zeal for justice and the strength of compassion, that we may use our liberty to work for peace within our borders and among all the nations, according to Your gracious will; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Jeremiah 29:4-14

Reader: Thomas Jefferson wrote, "I have always said, I always will say, that the studious

perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands."

Jeremiah 29:4-14 God calls the Israelites to seek the peace and prosperity of their nation.

4 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

8 Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. 9 They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD.

10 This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

THE EPISTLE LESSON 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Reader: George Washington wrote in his own copy of Halley's Bible Handbook, *"It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."*

1 Timothy 2:1-4 God calls the church to pray for the leaders of their nation.

1 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Luke 20:20-26

Reader: Abraham Lincoln wrote on October 6, 1862, *"We are indeed going through a great trial - a fiery trial. In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out His great purposes, I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to His will, and that it might be so, I have sought His aid."*

Luke 20:20-26 Jesus calls God's people to give appropriate honor to civil leaders.

20 Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. 21 So the spies questioned him: "Teacher, we

know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. 22 Is it right for us to pay taxes to **Caesar** or not?"

23 He saw through their duplicity and said to them, 24 "Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?" 25 "Caesar's," they replied. He said to them, **"Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."**

26 They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.

INTRO - My first church was in St. Louis. It was an inner city church, and we reached out to everyone in the community. Our VBS would be full of children who hadn't been raised in the church. One day when I was teaching I taught that stealing was wrong. One young man said, "Hmm. I was told that 'ripping off' wasn't wrong. In other words, this boy's mother had told him there were times that stealing was ok. I was teaching him God's law. But, when someone is taught different directives from 2 different sources, which one do you follow?"

I. That is not unlike the choices we face at times as Christian citizens. We are bound to worship and serve the Lord. We are also called to honor our government. But what do we do when it seems the government is calling us to behavior that is contrary to the direction of our Lord? Jesus gives direction in today's lesson. In Luke 20:25 we are told, **25. "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."**

II. Our first loyalty is to God.

A. The first commandment says, **"You shall have no other gods before me."**

1. Jesus repeats this after He was asked, **36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."**

2. We owe respect, honor, we owe worship to God because he is God.

B. But, we owe Him worship and praise because He has loved us beyond reason.

1. God sent His own Son from heaven to live for us, to die for us, to rise for us, so that we could have eternal life.

2. When someone sacrifices for us in this way, we want to serve Him.

III. But that doesn't mean we don't owe the government honor and respect also.

A. Jesus says to **"give to Caesar what is Caesar's."**

1. In Romans 13 we are told, **Romans 13:6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.**

2. God has created governments, and we are to respect them when they don't call us to act contrary to God's will.

B. Actually, the best way we can do that is by prayer.

1. We are told in 1 Timothy 2, **1 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.**

2. We are to pray for those in authority, all those in authority. They need God's help and guidance.

C. God calls us to work for the prosperity of the place we live.

1. Jeremiah 29: **7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."**

2. Let me say that governing is difficult. It includes difficult choices. We should be thankful for Christians who are willing to try to lead toward God's will.

3. The truth is that God can and does help those who govern and serve.

CONCLUSION - Surprisingly, the answer of Jesus in today's Gospel lesson would not call that boy from my first church to turn against his mother. The boy is supposed to honor his father and mother. He was to love her, to respect her, and even to obey her, when she wasn't telling her son to do something that was contrary to God's will. You see, parents aren't perfect. But parents are the plan of God. The same is true when it comes to government. We owe God our first allegiance. But, as we worship God we are also to respect and serve those in authority, through prayer and public service.