



**NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
SUNDAY, AUGUST 2ND, 2020**

## **Scarcity? An Ethics and Economics of Generosity**



Today we continue the rather disturbing journey of Jacob: his less than admirable qualities, again on display, but also his on again, off again relationship with Yahweh. On the other hand, we move forward in the Gospel of Matthew, from chapter 13 which included an array of parables about the Kingdom, to the well-known story about the Loaves and Fishes. This reading is interesting in what it says about the question of the distribution of resources in communities and in the way it postulates in story form, the beginnings of an ethics of economics which challenges accepted 'orthodox' thought.

## GATHERING

### Announcements

#### **We Prepare Ourselves: Jésus le Christ (Jesus the Christ) (Taizé)**

*Jésus le Christ, lumière intérieure,  
Ne laisse pas mes ténèbres me parler.*

*Jésus le Christ, lumière intérieure,  
Donne-moi d'accueillir ton amour.*

Here are the words in singable English:

*Jesus, your light is shining within us,  
Let not my doubts and my darkness speak to me.  
Jesus, your light is shining within us.  
Let my heart always welcome your love.*

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/post/162767874225/taiz%C3%A9-jesus-le-christ-french-english-spanish>

### **Welcome**

In the name of God,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with you  
**And also with you**

### **Lighting the Paschal Candle**

#### **Hymn/Song: Gather Us In (TiS 474, Marty Haugen)**

#### **A Meditation upon the Story of Fish and People (based on the Gospel for today)**

He came ashore into crowds:  
the crowds with little peace  
the crowds with little joy  
the crowds with little hope

with hurts unnumbered

in a place like desert  
a place like emptiness  
a place of the aching heart

***and the hour became late  
and the shadows lengthened  
and hunger was deeply felt.***

Where shall crowds go  
in this hour like emptiness,  
in this time of warring,  
in the gathering shadows of despair?

Where shall we buy  
the hope that strengthens,  
the love that nourishes,  
the peace we desperately need?

***See how our baskets feel nearly empty,  
how in our own hurting,  
weariness and hunger  
we believe we have little to give.***

But hear, in the words  
of the one who is kindness,  
whose compassion reaches  
beyond the setting sun,

the hope our hearts long for,  
on which we can feed:

hear the invitation  
to share even our weakness  
for it contains the promise

***that there is no emptiness  
where the Source of all life  
flows;***

that there is no place where  
death's shadows are falling

where the Redeemer of life  
does not go.

We can feed upon that promise,  
promise of sufficiency,  
promise of despair overcome.  
We can share, eat, and be full.

***And there is plenty for the journey.***

**Peace** (This week the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle invites us to pray for the peoples of Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea. As we greet each other, let us include these peoples in our thoughts with the rising tide of Covid-19 in areas with few resources to defend life.

**SMG**

## **LET'S HEAR THE WORD**

### **Some Thoughts about Scarcity and Abundance**

With unabated bounty the land of England blooms and grows; waving with yellow harvests; thick-studded with workshops, industrial implements, with fifteen millions of workers, understood to be the strongest, the cunningest and the willingest our Earth ever had. These people are here; the work they have done, the fruit they have realized is here, abundant, exuberant on every hand of us: and behold, some baleful fiat as of Enchantment has gone forth, saying, "Touch it not, ye workers, ye master-workers, ye master-idlers; none of you can touch it, no man of you shall be the better for it; this is enchanted fruit!"

**Thomas Carlyle, Past and Present**

When everything is subject to money, then the scarcity of money makes everything scarce, including the basis of human life and happiness. Such is the life of the slave—one whose actions are compelled by threat to survival. Perhaps the deepest indication of our slavery is the monetization of time." **Charles Eisenstein, Sacred Economics: Money, Gift, and Society in the Age of Transition**

## Genesis 32:22-32 (The Message)

Jeanette Steer

This story of Jacob wrestling with God (Yahweh) is a fascinating read, not easy to grasp, but quite easy to misinterpret. We leave the disturbing story of last week behind, where Jacob and Laban cheated each other, trading and abusing the women Rachel and Leah. Today, as Jacob arrives back at the border of the Promised Land, he has to confront Esau, his brother, whom he had deceived earlier on through the illegitimate acquiring of Esau's birthright. Fearing that he may not be able to get away with manipulation on his wits alone, he prays to God to help him, while also seeking to appease Esau with gifts; and if they don't work, organizing a back-door escape. Clearly Jacob is the sort of guy who thinks that God helps those who help themselves.

In our reading, we find Jacob camping on the edges of the River Jabbok, a tributary of the Jordan, wrestling with an unnamed assailant: in the Hebrew, an "*ish*", a man. The man is unable to prevail and Jacob demands a blessing. It becomes clear as we read on, that this man is Yahweh himself. What stands out here, is that Yahweh in struggling with Jacob stands in Esau's place – the one who was cheated years before. The implication is this: that God does not always stand as Jacob's ally. We often think of God as One who is with us as a source of comfort. Here we hear otherwise. God will not always be the one we might hope or want God to be as we 'plot and scheme' our ways – even in a good sense – through life. That said, God's blessing will be the last word for us, as it was for Jacob

**22-23** But during the night he got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He got them safely across the brook along with all his possessions.

**24-25** But Jacob stayed behind by himself, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he couldn't get the best of Jacob as they wrestled, he deliberately threw Jacob's hip out of joint.

**26** The man said, "Let me go; it's daybreak."

Jacob said, "I'm not letting you go 'til you bless me."

**27** The man said, "What's your name?"

He answered, "Jacob."

**28** The man said, "But no longer. Your name is no longer Jacob. From now on it's Israel (God-Wrestler); you've wrestled with God and you've come through."

**29** Jacob asked, "And what's your name?"

The man said, "Why do you want to know my name?" And then, right then and there, he blessed him.

**30** Jacob named the place Peniel (God's Face) because, he said, "I saw God face-to-face and lived to tell the story!"

<sup>31-32</sup> The sun came up as he left Peniel, limping because of his hip. (This is why Israelites to this day don't eat the hip muscle; because Jacob's hip was thrown out of joint.)

The word of the Lord

***Thanks be to God***

**Psalm 17:1-7,15 (Good News Translation)**

Jeanette Steer

Psalm 17 presents us with a loud cry for deliverance by the psalmist. That cry is described most clearly in the section of the psalm omitted from today's reading, vv. 8-14. The psalmist speaks of 'the wicked' despoiling them, surrounding them, being pitiless.

In the first part of the psalm, which is set for today's reading, the psalmist calls for God's help and deliverance, proclaiming their innocence of wrongdoing. The merciless oppression and apparent success of the wicked weigh heavily on the psalmist (cf. Psalm 10). In turn the psalmist speaks with a touch of sarcasm in v. 14, using the language of blessing but implying punishment. In the latter part of the psalm which is not included, there is a sense of the psalmist looking forward to 'pay-back' of his opponents. The language is difficult, knowing that we read this psalm through the lens of the New Testament and Jesus' ethical teaching.

What is off-putting here in particular, is the apparent lack of self-awareness of the one who prays the psalm, as he claims total innocence for himself. The Genesis reading we have just heard about Jacob, should remind us that we are all compromised, and any prayer we offer, should be sharply aware of that.

**17** Listen, O LORD, to my plea for justice;  
pay attention to my cry for help!  
Listen to my honest prayer.

***2 You will judge in my favour,  
because you know what is right.***

***3*** You know my heart.  
You have come to me at night;  
you have examined me completely  
and found no evil desire in me.  
I speak no evil,

***4 as others do;  
I have obeyed your command  
and have not followed paths of violence.***

***5*** I have always walked in your way  
and have never strayed from it.

***6*** I pray to you, O God, because you answer me;  
so turn to me and listen to my words.

<sup>7</sup> Reveal your wonderful love and save me;  
at your side I am safe from my enemies.

<sup>15</sup> ***But I will see you, because I have done no wrong;  
and when I awake, your presence will fill me with joy.***

### **Romans 9: 1-5 (Good News Translation)**

If we forget Paul's situation, it is easy to think that Romans 1-8 is the main substance of his letter to the Romans. After that it peters out. Such an assumption rightly notes the climax which Romans 8 brings: we can face the future with confidence. We look to the transformation of all people and the whole universe. Yet Paul's concerns cannot be divided up in that way. He has been under attack not only for setting the Law aside, but also for betraying his own people. How can he reduce Jew and Gentile to the same level as he does in Romans 2 and 3 without calling Israel's special place into question? This is behind the questions he poses to himself there: has the Jew no advantage? (3:1; 3:9).

Romans 9 is simply continuing his response. It is deeply personal because such accusations strike at the heart of what he considers precious. In our passage he declares himself. Far from now not caring for his own people any longer, he cares very deeply. 9:1 is fully taken up with trying to assure the Romans of his genuineness. Then in 9:2 he goes on to declare his deep personal involvement. He grieves for his people. 9:3 goes even further: he would be willing to be cursed if only it brought about their salvation. These are important assertions. Paul has neither abandoned his people nor does he espouse the view that they are just like any other people. He really does think they have had a special role. He really does value that. Christ's coming has not altered that fact. He would understand why we have a so-called Old Testament which we treasure. There is something special there (which does not mean we must disparage all other traditions). Paul has not swung into anti-Semitism or changed into neutral as far as Israel is concerned.

**9** I am speaking the truth; I belong to Christ and I do not lie. My conscience, ruled by the Holy Spirit, also assures me that I am not lying <sup>2</sup> when I say how great is my sorrow, how endless the pain in my heart <sup>3</sup> for my people, my own flesh and blood! For their sake I could wish that I myself were under God's curse and separated from Christ. <sup>4</sup> They are God's people; he made them his children and revealed his glory to them; he made his covenants<sup>[a]</sup> with them and gave them the Law; they have the true worship; they have received God's promises; <sup>5</sup> they are descended from the famous Hebrew ancestors; and Christ, as a human being, belongs to their race. May God, who rules over all, be praised forever!<sup>[b]</sup> Amen.

### **Matthew 14:13-21 (Good News Translation)**

Caroline Turner

This Gospel story is well grounded in the Christian tradition, with versions in Mark and Luke with John's Gospel interpreting it as Jesus as the bread of life. Christians have bickered over its correct interpretation, with some emphasizing its divine magical dimensions and others rationalizing it as a story of sharing. At heart, regardless if one is of

a magical or rationalist disposition, what stands is the idea of the vision of liberation and reconciliation that inspired the story to begin with. Moreover, this story takes us to the sacrament of the Eucharist, which itself is all about the renewal of human beings and human society.

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus heard the news about John, he left there in a boat and went to a lonely place by himself. The people heard about it, and so they left their towns and followed him by land. <sup>14</sup> Jesus got out of the boat, and when he saw the large crowd, his heart was filled with pity for them, and he healed their sick.

<sup>15</sup> That evening his disciples came to him and said, “It is already very late, and this is a lonely place. Send the people away and let them go to the villages to buy food for themselves.”

<sup>16</sup> “They don't have to leave,” answered Jesus. “You yourselves give them something to eat!”

<sup>17</sup> “All we have here are five loaves and two fish,” they replied.

<sup>18</sup> “Then bring them here to me,” Jesus said. <sup>19</sup> He ordered the people to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks to God. He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. <sup>20</sup> Everyone ate and had enough. Then the disciples took up twelve baskets full of what was left over. <sup>21</sup> The number of men who ate was about five thousand, not counting the women and children.

The Gospel of the Lord

***Praise to you Lord Christ***

**Some thoughts....**

**Let's Give: Our Offerings**

**Doxology**

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
praise him, all creatures here below,  
praise him above, ye heavenly host,  
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

**Prayer of Dedication**

## THE SACRAMENT

**Hymn: Far beyond our mind's grasp (TiS 542, Caturrog Na Nonoy, Francisco F. Feliciano)**

### **Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you  
***And also with you***

Let us lift up our hearts.

***We lift them to the Lord.***

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

***It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours

Our Lord and God,

For you alone are worthy.

In time beyond our dreaming,

You brought forth light out of darkness,

And in the love of Christ your Son,

You set women and men at the heart of your creation.

And so we praise you,

with the faithful of every time and place,

joining with the choirs of angels and the whole creation

in the eternal hymn

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,***

***Heaven and earth***

***are full of your glory.***

***Hosanna in the highest.***

***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.***

***Hosanna in the highest***

Through him,  
 in him  
 and because of him,  
 We affirm the Church's faith

***Christ has died.***  
***Christ has risen.***  
***Christ will come again.***

## Institution

### Lord's Prayer

Let us say the Lord's Prayer

***Our Father in heaven,***  
***hallowed be your name,***  
***your kingdom come,***  
***your will be done,***  
***on earth as in heaven.***  
***Give us today our daily bread.***

***Forgive us our sins,***  
***as we forgive those who sin against us.***  
***Save us from the time of trial***  
***and deliver us from evil.***

***For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,***  
***now and forever. Amen.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여  
 이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며  
 나라이 임하옵시며  
 뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이

땅에서도 이루어지이다.  
 오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고  
 우리가 우리에게  
 죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이  
 우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고  
 우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고  
 다만 악에서 구하옵소서  
 대개 나라와 권세와 영광이  
 아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

### **Breaking of the Bread**

Christ is the bread of joy  
 Who shares food with sinners.

Christ is the cup of life,  
 Who revives the faint-hearted

Let us receive what we are;  
 Let us become what we receive.

### **Lamb of God**

Jesus, Wisdom of God,  
*have mercy on us*

Jesus, Word made flesh,  
*have mercy on us*  
 Jesus, Liberator of creation  
*grant us peace.*

### **Communion**

#### **Distribution**

*We receive the sacrament "in one kind" for reasons of personal safety. You may remain seated as the wafer is served.*

## **Prayer after Communion**

Blessed be God who calls us together

***Praise to God who makes us one people***

Blessed be God who has forgiven our sin

***Praise to God who gives us hope and freedom***

Blessed be God whose word is proclaimed

***Praise to God who is revealed as lover***

Blessed be God who alone has called us

***We offer all that we are and all we shall become***

## **Prayers of the People**

Emily Jacobsson

At the end of each prayer/petition the one who prays offers the words; “Turn our scarcity”, and the response is “to generosity”.

**Closing Hymn: We are marching (TiS 666, Siyahamba, South African traditional, tr. Anders Nyberg)**

## **Blessing and Sending Out**

The blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit  
Be upon you and remain with you always

Our service has ended.  
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

***In the name of Christ***

**We sing twice: Shalom to you (TiS 778, Somos del Señor, Elise Shoemaker Eslinger)**

**Musical Postlude**

**Organist:**

John Hughes