



EVENING PRAYER DEVOTIONAL

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2020

Readings: Psalm 44; Proverbs 17; Ephesians 1:1-14

The lectionary for Evening Prayer transitions to a new book of the Bible, Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The first fourteen verses of the letter are so full of rich theological insight that one might miss what Paul is actually saying to his hearers. Ultimately, he is saying something about their past, their present, and their future, and therefore ours.

The Past. "...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him." There is never a Plan B when it comes to God's purposes. There is only *the* plan. Before the foundation of the world, God knew when He created us that we would ultimately distrust Him and therefore we would be estranged from our Creator. This estrangement and disconnection with God brought upon our own sinfulness, guilt, and shame. While this was not the way things were supposed to be, even despite our situation, God knew and was determined that we should be presented holy and blameless in His sight. How could He put together what was so foundationally broken within us?

The Present. "In him (*Jesus*) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us..." Jesus came in the fullness of time to accomplish what we couldn't do, and what our hearts have longed to receive. We have, at present, through the cross of Christ the totality of the forgiveness of our sins. Our past sins, the sins we are currently committing, and the ones we will commit are forever forgiven in the cross of Jesus Christ. Since we are forgiven, we are also redeemed or bought back to Almighty God.

Whatever our circumstances, no matter how we feel in the moment or think otherwise, we have the

promise now that through the blood of Jesus we are regarded as holy and blameless. Notice how Paul weaves the Trinity within our salvation. The Father is the one who chose us before the foundation of the world (v. 3), the Son forgives and redeems us in His blood (v. 7), and the Holy Spirit seals us in the Gospel and is our guarantee for the inheritance to come. But what is this inheritance?

The Future. "...were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." Here we see that our salvation, proclaimed through the Gospel given in the past and currently ours by faith, will be fully made known to us in the life of the world to come. Paul is holding an "already/not yet" tension in our salvation. While our sins are totally forgiven and we stand redeemed, we still await the full restoration of the whole created order; or, as Paul puts it, "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." While we wait, we have the Holy Spirit (our guarantee) who preserves us in faith by the preaching the Gospel. Even when we feel forgotten, remember that the Father chose you before the foundation of the world. Even when your sin gets the best of you and you think surely this time God will give up on me, remember that you are blessed in the Beloved Son by whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And even when you look around you, tempted to lose all hope, remember that you have the Holy Spirit within you as the guarantee that all sad things will come untrue.

Baptized child of the Triune God rest easy upon your pillows tonight. Amen.

- Fr. Joe

