



The Benefice of the Piddle Valley, Hilton & Ansty, Cheselbourne and Melcombe Horsey

29th December 2019
Christmas 1

Altar Colour - White

Readings: Isa. 63: 7-9, Psalm 148, Heb. 2: 10-end, Matt. 2: 13-end

Collect: Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of his divinity; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Isaiah 63:7-9 (ESV) - The LORD's Mercy Remembered

I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely." And he became their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

COMMENT: The poems and prayers by the unnamed prophet of Israel's Babylonian exile in the 6th century BC and a later group of his disciples were subsequently attached to the collection of Isaiah's prophecies. This passage comes from what some scholars call Third Isaiah (chapters 56-66), though this designation is best characterised as an oversimplification. Passages appear all through the Book of Isaiah which are obviously the hand of a later redaction than either of the 8th or the early 6th century prophets (e.g. chapters 24-27). This passage probably dates from the middle of the 6th century BC not too long after the destruction of the temple and the exile. The reading forms the beginning of an extended prayer (63:7-64:12) and possibly a liturgy. The whole attitude of the prayer parallels that

found in Lamentations and similar laments such as Psalms 36, 74, 77 and 79. Yet despite its sombre mood, the excerpt expresses trust in God based on the gracious acts of God toward Israel. Most important of these acts according to these lines was God's choice of Israel as God's people and God's saving intervention in the nation's history. The wording of this passage describes the relationship of God to Israel as one of intense and steadfast love (verse 7). The depth of this love comes dramatically to the fore revealing the power of one of the strongest texts in the Old Testament that conveys the sublime thought that God is afflicted by the suffering of those in distress.

Matthew 2:13-23 (ESV) - The Flight to Egypt

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Herod Kills the Children

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

The Return to Nazareth

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

COMMENT: This excerpt tells of God intervening to prevent the death of the infant Christ Child in Herod's massacre of the children of Bethlehem. The incident fulfills the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:15 (verse 18). However, Jeremiah's oracle originally dealt with the lamentations of the Ephraimites being led into exile after the fall of Judah and Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 586 BC. A further allusion to the Hebrew scriptures occurs in the warning to Joseph in vs.20 derived from Exodus 4:18-20. There Moses was called to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. Again in v.23, Joseph chose to make a home for his family in Nazareth in fulfillment of another supposed prophecy from an unknown source. It may also be an allusion to Judges 13:5 or perhaps Isaiah 11:1 or 53:2. The real point of the story is to portray Jesus as the Messiah by quoting Hebrew scriptures to show how Jesus fulfilled several prophecies and how the Messiah could come from Nazareth. As originally written, these prophecies did not have this intent. We can determine, however, his theological purpose here and throughout the gospel: to portray Jesus as the Messiah come not as Moses to promulgate a new law, but to initiate a new people of God in whom the salvation-history of Israel is fulfilled and among whom all people of all nations, Jew or Gentile, are welcome on the same basis of faithful discipleship.

Short Preface: And now we give you thanks because, by the power of the Holy Spirit, he took our nature upon him and was born of the Virgin Mary his mother, that being himself without sin, he might make us clean from all sin.

Post Communion: Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home: help your Church to live as one family, united in love and obedience, and bring us all at last to our home in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing: Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with peace and goodwill and make you partakers of the divine nature; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**



Benefice Prayer Requests:

Please pray for the sick, those in hospital, and those recovering from illness or surgery: Pat Kenwick, June Kellaway, Ann Lambert, Fay Lord, Reg Hanbury, Geoff Harris, Ruth Tutt, Roger Gray, Bernard, Martin DeWavrin, Marion Traynor...

Please pray for all who find this time of year difficult.

What's going on around the Benefice!



Food Bank: Thank you for your generosity over the last few months, we shall continue to collect and tin/packet a week for the Dorchester Foodbank.

Sunday 5th January 2020

Epiphany

1 John 3: 22-end 4:1-6, Psalm 2: 7-end, Matt 4: 12-17, 23-end

8.30am Holy Communion at Alton Pancras

9.30am Family Service at Piddlehinton

10.30am Songs of Praise at Hilton

11.00am Morning Prayer at Piddletrenthide (Said)

11.00am Morning Prayer at Melcombe Horsey (Said)

6.00pm Evening Prayer at Cheselbourne

Confirmation: There has been some interest expressed regarding confirmation. Fr. Roger will be contacting Bishop Nicholas of Salisbury to arrange this to take place within the Benefice. Please email the Rector if you would be interested in becoming a confirmation candidate.

Dates for your Diary

Stepping Stones Home Group, Tuesday 7th January 2020

Tiddlers 0-3's at PVS, Tuesday 7th January 2020

Police Station Chaplaincy Visits by Fr. Roger 15th January 2020

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