



1 Samuel 1:4-20; 1 Samuel 2:1-10 as Canticle; Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25; Mark 13:1-8

COLLECT

Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to be the light of the world. Free us from all that darkens and ensnares us, and bring us to eternal light and joy; through the power of him who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading

A READING FROM THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb. Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly. She made this vow: "O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head." As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." And she said, "Let your servant find favour in your sight." Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer. They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the Lord."

CANTICLE

- My heart exults in the Lord, my strength is exalted in my God.
- My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.
- There is no Holy One like you, O Lord, nor any Rock like you, our God.
- For you are a God of knowledge and by you our actions are weighed.
- The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength.
- Those who were full now search bread, but those who were hungry are well fed.
- The barren woman has borne sevenfold, but she who has many children is forlorn.
- Both the poor and the rich are of your making, you bring low and you also exalt.
- You raise up the poor from the dust, and lift the needy from the ash heap.
- You make them sit with the rulers, and inherit a place of honour.
- For the pillars of the earth are yours and on them you have set the world.

1 SAMUEL 2:1-10

Second Reading

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, “he sat down at the right hand of God,” and since then has been waiting “until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.” For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

HEBREWS 10:11-14, 19-25

Gospel

THE HOLY GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO MARK

As Jesus came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.” When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?” Then Jesus began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.”

MARK 13:1-8

Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

Do any of you remember the robot in the very old series, *Lost In Space*? He would interrupt what everyone was doing from time to time to warn them of impending dangers. With his robot arms strangely flailing he would shout: *Warning! Warning! Warning!* many times over.

Our Lord also provides warnings in today’s Gospel reading. The difference is that our Lord is one with God and is very specific about the categories of the dangers that we face. We are warned about the collapse of the symbols of religion — about false prophets — about wars/rumours of wars — about natural disasters. These are the areas to which we are called to be sensitive and prepared. Theologians call them “the 4 dangers”.

In the Anglican Church priests typically are ordained twice. Once, as a Deacon in the church to establish servanthood. And once as a Priest in the church. I was ordained as a Deacon at St. Paul’s Cathedral and months later ordained as a Priest at Bishop Cronyn Anglican Church in London. There was a recent article in the London Free Press noting that Bishop Cronyn Church will be holding its last and final worship service this December.

The childhood memories I cherish the most are those when I was a teenager living out in the countryside. The open space, the greenery, the wild animals, the scenery, the quiet, and more all helped to refresh my soul. In such a setting, a sense of closeness to God was ever with me. Today, the home of my teenage years has been flattened by a bulldozer to make way for a row house development. Good-bye countryside!

Also as a teenager, we attended a Presbyterian church that was undergoing construction so we would be able to not be limited to the basement area we had been using for worship. The above ground construction was well underway. The church tower was almost completed. A thunderstorm came along one night. A lightning bolt hit the church superstructure and all that was above ground level was burned or heat damaged to the point that the greater portion of the structure had to be demolished and we had to start to build upward all over again.

Jesus surprised his disciples by declaring that all the stones of the Temple would one day come tumbling down. The Temple was greatly symbolic to the Jewish people. In the time of our Gospel reading, the temple was a place of history and pride and identity. The people had every expectation it would last forever. Within the temple were holy rituals connected to sacred items and the inspiring smell of incense. It was seen as the dwelling place of God and its inner walls were covered with gold and inscriptions. Ancient texts were read there, and rituals of sacrifice brought the people’s attention to the mysteries of life and death. It would have been unthinkable to consider the possibility of such an edifice to come to being a pile of rubble. Yet, Jesus’ words were prophetic. The Temple indeed is long gone. People had to adapt and move on.

How could any of these things happen if God was and is in control of God’s creation? Why would God allow such wonderful things to be destroyed — especially those which supported the worship of God? And what else do we learn that our God does not prevent from being in our world? Consider from today’s reading: — false prophets — wars/rumours of wars — natural disasters.

I am a bit of a “News Junky” — that is to say, I spend a lot of time each day at my computer trying to keep up on what is happening around the world. I do this for a couple of reasons. I believe that it is necessary to staying relevant as a Priest. And secondly, I confess, it has become a bit of an addiction. So it is that I have some awareness of what is happening in society and how it may impact us as worshippers of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

What grabs my attention about today’s Gospel reading is how it seems to relate so well to the age in which we live, almost point by point. The symbols of the good health of our Christian faith, including our church buildings, seem to be in decline, and we are seeing Christians increasingly persecuted or ridiculed for their faith in many areas. We are inundated by false prophets — those who would extol the life-giving virtues of a totally secular society — one which mainly worships all goods, symbols and services that can be bought and sold. We would err if we did not also consider the false prophets of extremists who identify themselves as Christians, Jews, Muslims or as members of other faiths or ideologies. As we saw in Paris, the grief they bring with them can be severe.

Wars and rumours of wars are constant companions in our national and international lives — again, witness Paris! And we are seeing that as technology advances, the ability of our adversaries to penetrate closer and closer to where we live increases — e.g., consider 911, Paris and North Korea. Also then, are the natural disasters which appear to be happening in greater numbers each year.

One of my favourite New Testament Bible stories is that of the “Woman at the Well”. You may recall how Jesus began to speak to her about the “Living Water” that he was prepared to give her. At one point in their conversation Jesus told this Samaritan woman that, *...the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*

Jesus in today’s readings and in the Woman at the Well encounter, points us to understanding that physical things may symbolize some dear and sacred things to us. But when push comes to shove, the physical is not to be relied upon at the same level or in the same way as the spiritual. Only the spiritual is eternal, and the physical is always eventually temporary. The physical may be a lot of things, but the physical ultimately has a limited existence in whatever form it may be.

God is spirit. Not only do we have a spiritual side to our nature, God dwells within each of us in spirit. It is well for us to ever be in touch with our spiritual self and with God as we ride through the bumps and dips of the journey of our life — our journey into eternity. And in that respect, God is the only answer.

Only God.