



*The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.*

*The Collect.*

**A**LMIGHTY and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service; Grant, we beseech thee, that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. 28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. (John 6:27-29)*

*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. (James 1:12)*

This powerful and lovely Collect was altered only in one respect by Archbishop Cranmer from its original form offered in the Sacramentary of Leo. He added the word **ONLY** before gift for he knew that even our tithes and offerings are not truly gifts we have gotten, but merely returning a portion of our increase that came from God in the first place.

REVIEW: Do you remember the parts of Collects as given in our first lesson on the Collects: 1) the **Address**, 2) the **Acknowledgement**, 3) the **Petition**, 4) the **Aspiration**, and 5) the **Pleading**. As you read through this Collect again, can you separate the Collect into its constituent parts?

**ALMIGHTY and merciful God** Every Collect opens with the invocation addressed to the Father. (John 16:23) God is both Almighty, and He is merciful, else we would have no hope of salvation. He has the **POWER** to grant forgiveness and salvation; and He is inclined, by His great mercy, to do so. That is His nature. We are nothing apart from God – our very being is given by Him. I heard a minister tell the story years ago of a debate that took place between God and Satan: *I can do ANYTHING*

you can do, God, or at least make it very similar “Is that so?” responded God. Can you make a man? “Sure,” responded Satan, as he reached down to get a handful of dirt. “Not so fast, you old Deceiver,” said God, you’ve got to use your own dirt! Even the dirt that comprise our bodies was made by God. So what can you give One who owns every atomic particle in Creation and even your own body?

*“whose only gift it cometh that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service”* If you are feeling generous one day, what will you give to God with which you have not been blessed by Him? Your tithe and free will offerings are no gift, for He provided you the means of getting all of your wealth. Your labors and services of good works are no gift for He can accomplish every good thing without your anemic efforts. Your preaching and testimonies are not gifts for these are your bounden duties. In the very last instance, what can you give to God that He has not given? So what good thing can you do that will be of favor in the eyes of God? *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.* Actually, there is NOTHING that you can do for God since your good works are His own. *This is the WORK of God!* What could the thief on the cross return to God that would be pleasing? He had not a penny to his name, not a single free hand to perform any good work? He gave His HEART. That is ALL that He could give. In a sense, the Holy Ghost even drew that heart to Christ. *Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.* (Luke 17:9-10) Obedience is the duty we Owe God and it pleases Him as a father who is pleased with an obedient child; but the obedience is expected.

*“Grant, we beseech thee, that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life;±* You will observe that even our faithful obedience is a grant from God. We plead for that grace from God to be obedient in our lives. It becomes more and more obvious that all of our good works and faith are not ours, but those of God working in and through us. We dare not boast of anything in Christ.

What is the measure of faith and belief? *“that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises”* God never reneges on a promise, so how could we fail of those promises if we have faith and believe? Our Christian lives and testimonies are ample proof that we have believed unto saving faith from the beginning. A woman taken in adultery does not believe, repent, and turn to God only to return to her wicked ways afterwards. Heed the words of the Savior, *Go and sin no more!* But we all do sin more, don’t we, even after we have believed Christ? So what remedy is there for our sins after baptism? *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* (1 John 2:1-6)

*“through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord”* Do you see that all we have asked, we have not asked on behalf of our own merits, but those of Jesus Christ. Christ is the only One upon whose claims and merits we are justified in basing our hopes, our prayers, and our faith. He does ALL things well, and we fail more often than succeed.

*He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.* (Mark 7:37) You may not realize it, but you, too, were as deaf and dumb to God's voice as Lazarus as he lay in the stone-cold tomb of Bethany. It was the Holy Spirit of God that penetrated those dead tissues of the heart, the ears, the tongue, and the mind that called you forth into newness of life. Walk in that newness. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.* (Romans 6:3-10) Do you?