

Devotion on the Collect for the Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity Sunday - 1
November 2012 Anno Domini



Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.

GRANT, we beseech thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This Collect is the last to be taken from the Sacramentary of Gelasius to be used by Cranmer in the Book of Common Prayer. The Archbishop made only one notable change in substituting the word 'pardon' in the place of 'indulgence.' Being a man mindful of those 'acquired' meanings which words can take upon themselves that differ from the original through practical use. Indulgence was too closely related to a repugnant and erroneous means Rome used to squeeze money from her adherents.

GRANT, we beseech thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace. Who, among the peoples of the world, are beneficiaries of pardon and peace? It is only those who are the faithful people of the Lord as clearly elucidated in the prayer. We are pardoned through the blood of Jesus Christ, and we receive that peace which surpasses all understanding in our hearts thereby. ***And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*** (Phil 4:7) The peace of the Christian is not a peace from the noise and tumult of the world, but an inner peace that is granted IN SPITE of that noise and tumult of the world. It is a peace, as the above verse avers, of the heart and mind and that only through Jesus Christ.

There is a beautiful hymn entitled 'Blessed Quietness' or 'Joys are Flowing Like a River' that gives an excellent summary of that quiet comfort given by faith in Christ.

Blessed Quietness

Blessed quietness, holy quietness, Blest assurance in my soul! On the stormy sea, He speaks peace to me,] And the billows cease to roll.

In the above refrain, note that Christ speaks in the midst of the storm. He speaks peace to our HEARTS, not to the sea. It is when this peace is transported to the heart that the sea billows cease to roll. They are no longer threatening to the child of God. There is no other way whereby we may be cleansed from our sins except by pardon of Christ and the attendant peace which that pardon grants.

Peace is not a result of surrender to the world, but a surrender to God. Once we have surrendered our sin-burdened hearts to Him, the battle ceases, and the battlefield is hushed and quiet.

"...and serve thee with a quiet mind" How do we serve with a quiet mind, and what IS a quiet mind? There are a number of salient virtues of Anglican worship which are not characteristic of most of the mainline denominations – virtues such as a reading of much greater numbers of Scripture texts based on the Reformed Lectionary of the Book of Common Prayer. But another virtue of Anglican and biblical worship is the great reverence demonstrated both **before**, **during**, and **after** our worship services. In the Anglican service, the people gather quietly and unobtrusively as they enter the very doors of the church. There is no show of gossip or chatter in our foyers. The worshippers take their pews in an attitude that will be conducive to a reverence in both worship AND attitude. The worshippers often kneel as if they are coming before God personally, and surely they are if the counsel of Christ is believed: "**For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.**" (Matthew 18:20) We gather at church for one purpose, and one purpose only: to worship and reverence the Lord. If the President of the United States were to attend our services, would we gather outside the sanctuary and chatter as neighborhood gossips, or respectfully enter on our best behavior? Christ is a far greater dignitary than any earthly potentate! Do we recognize this fact?

During the service, we do not compete with the celebrant as he administers the daily office or Communion. We remain silent and respectful, not for the priest, but **for the Lord**. At the conclusion of the service, we do not follow the modern fad of hugging, and kissing, one another and telling them how much we love them. There will be opportunity for this in the fellowship hall. Once the last prayer is spoken, the worshippers remain in silent meditation until the candles are extinguished and a respectful silence is observed. This is Anglican worship and it differs from every other church of which I am familiar (unless we might add the beauty and dignity of the traditional Lutheran service).

Can you see the quiet beauty evidenced in this form of worship? We have a Prayer Book for a reason. That reason is to keep us reverent and respectful in the presence of the Lord during our worship of Him. We are kept from innovating and from adding worldly additions by either officiant or worshipper. This form of worship has existed since long before our Savior came bearing gifts of mercy, grace, truth, and salvation; in fact, from ancient Israel. Dare we sell out in order to satisfy the modern trend toward 'informality'?

I will quote an anonymous source whose words seem to beautifully illustrate the beauty of that Godly quietness enjoyed by God's chosen people at every place and at all times: "*The dew which so bountifully baptizes the flowers and grass, on quiet summer evenings, does not distill in wind and storm. So the dews of grace come down on calm and trustful souls. If we would receive the Holy Spirit of which the dew is an emblem, we must abide in patience and prayer, down low, as the grass waits for the dew.*"

I will quote another source that is not anonymous: *Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.* (Psalms 107:30) Do we come to church to know God better? Then heed this counsel: *Be still, and know that I am God* ((Psalms 46:10) Perhaps we would profit to remember this admonition next time we approach the sanctuary for worship. Will you?