

YEAR 1, PROPER 4, THURSDAY: EVENING PRAYER

The First Lesson. The Reader begins

A Reading from Ecclesiastes

Moreover I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work. I said in my heart with regard to the sons of men that God is testing them to show them that they are but beasts. For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth? So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should enjoy his work, for that is his lot; who can bring him to see what will be after him? Again I saw all the oppressions that are practiced under the sun. And

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ECCLESIASTES 3:16–4:16*; LUKE 18:1–8

WE INCLUDE ECCLESIASTES 4:4–16, THE CONCLUSION OF THE PASSAGE, “BECAUSE OF GREED AND ENVY, MAN’S LIFE IS MISERY MITIGATED ONLY BY HUMAN COMPANIONSHIP” (4:4–12) AND “THE IMPERMANENCE OF FAME” (4:13–16), (THE NEW OXFORD ANNOTATED RSV [1977], 4:1–12; N. 808, 4:13–16, N. 808).*

behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive; but better than both is he who has not yet been, and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun. Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. The fool folds his hands, and eats his own flesh. Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind. Again, I saw vanity under the sun: a person who has no one, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business. Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, they are warm; but how can one be warm alone? And though a man might prevail

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against one who is alone, two will withstand him. A threefold cord is not quickly broken. Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who will no longer take advice, even though he had gone from prison to the throne or in his own kingdom had been born poor. I saw all the living who move about under the sun, as well as that youth, who was to stand in his place; there was no end of all the people; he was over all of them. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

The Reader concludes

The Word of the Lord.

The Second Lesson. The Reader begins

A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke

And Jesus told the disciples a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Vindicate me against my adversary.’ For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I

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neither fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.’ ” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

The Reader concludes

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