

YEAR 2, PROPER 7, TUESDAY: EVENING PRAYER

For use with the First Lesson

Adapted from *The Vocabulary of the Church* (1960):

diviners

di-VIGHN-erz

Beth-she'mesh

beth-SHEE-mesh

The First Lesson. The Reader begins

A Reading from the First Book of Samuel

The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place.” They said, “If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you.” And they said, “What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?” They answered, “Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines; for the same plague was upon all of you and upon your lords. So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give

glory to the God of Israel; perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land. Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had made sport of them, did not they let the people go, and they departed? Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milch cows upon which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. And take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart, and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off, and let it go its way. And watch; if it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-she'mesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm; but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us, it happened to us by chance.” The men did so, and took two milch cows and yoked them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-she'mesh along one highway, lowing as they went; they turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-she'mesh. Now the people of Beth-she'mesh were reaping their wheat

harvest in the valley; and when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it. The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-she'mesh, and stopped there. A great stone was there; and they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was beside it, in which were the golden figures, and set them upon the great stone; and the men of Beth-she'mesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to the LORD. And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron.

The Reader concludes

The Word of the Lord.

The Second Lesson. The Reader begins

A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans

What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say?

“Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Now to one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due. And to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. So also

David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

“Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin.” Is this blessing pronounced only upon the circumcised, or also upon the uncircumcised? We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, and likewise the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

The Reader concludes The Word of the Lord.