

Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany
Cycle B RCL
Revised

Isaiah 40:21-31

This is part of the glorious opening of the so-called “Second Isaiah,” the work of the unnamed disciple of Isaiah who prophesied during the exile (586-538 BCE) to the Jewish captives in Babylon and whose work appears in Isaiah 40-55. The prophet’s theme is that God has now executed punishment on Israel for its sins and will now restore Israel to the land of promise through a miraculous deliverance. The present section of the opening aims at convincing the hearer that because God is the creator of all and because those who might oppose God’s will are nothing, there is no reason to abandon hope for the Lord’s salvation.

Psalms 147:1-12, 21c

This *hymn* is one of the closing hymns of the Psalter, Psalms 146-150, that begin and end with the exclamation “Hallelujah,” a combination of the plural imperative “praise!” and the shortened form of God’s personal name. Some call this collection the Final Hallel in contrast to Psalms 111-118, the Great Hallel. The current hymn came into being after the exile and the restoration of the temple on Mt. Zion.

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Paul’s claim that he had become “all things to all people” (9:22) responds to complaints that he had forsaken his Jewish heritage by consorting with Gentiles and, coming from Gentile opponents, that he still kept the Jewish Law. Paul answers that he both observes the Law and involves himself in the Gentile world for the sake of the Gospel and not because of some esoteric “knowledge” of which he might boast.

Mark 1:29-39

This completes Mark’s account of a day in the life of Jesus begun in Mark 1:21. The healing of Peter’s mother-in-law and others from Capernaum who were sick shows Jesus’ power over disease as a way of legitimating the message that he preaches.

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