

Proper 20
Year C RCL

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

In the collection of oracles in Jeremiah 8:14-9:26 it is not easy to distinguish Jeremiah's expressions of grief over Jerusalem's coming punishment and those of the Almighty. There is almost a community of feeling between them—at least as envisioned by the editor/author. In verse 19-20 the prophet recites Judah's lament and its accusation and couples this with God's reply to the effect that the coming punishment is on account of the idols and images in Jerusalem. Verse 20 returns to the people's complaint that they have waited in vain for the Lord's salvation.

Psalm 79:1-9

This is a *community lament*. Others of this genre include Psalms 44, 74, 80, 83, and Lamentations 5. This kind of psalm commences with the shortest possible invocation of God. In this case, being part of the “Elohistic Psalter” the name invoked is 'elohim “God.” The complaints in the psalm Gerstenberger takes to be formulaic and liturgical in nature and of little use in dating. Terrien, on the other hand, takes the usual view that the psalm reflects the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Since the community laments have a known structure of complaint, petition, and imprecation; Gerstenberger's formulaic and liturgical observation is true. To place the psalm in Israel's history more exactly than this is, perhaps, pushing the evidence.

or

Amos 8:4-7

The long reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (786–746 BCE) was that country's most pleasant and peaceful time. The prophet Amos, however, who was a native of the southern kingdom of Judah, exposed the seamy side of Jeroboam's reign, aiming his barbs primarily at the petty corruptions of everyday life. Here Amos directs his wrath at merchants who are impatient with the new moon and sabbath rests because of their desire to return quickly to their dishonest trade.

Psalm 113

Enthronement psalms are *hymns* of praise that make special reference to God's enthronement as king of the whole earth. Some investigators have held that the enthronement psalms were actually part of a yearly liturgy that symbolically enthroned the Lord as the God of Israel. Here the contrast is between God's cosmic majesty and the lowliness of the poor and needy to whom God gives succor.

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Although by this time Christians had come through what may have been the first empire-wide harassment of followers of Christ at the end of Domitian's reign (81–96 CE), the author still enjoins his readers to pray for those in authority. The Christian Gnostics, against whom this epistle seems to have been composed, believed on the other hand that Christians ought to ignore this world and its rulers entirely and concentrate on the heavenly world.

Luke 16:1-13

The subject of parables is always the coming of God's Kingdom, not personal morality. The focus in this parable is upon the shrewdness of the dishonest steward in handling the emergency of his dismissal. Jesus does not put forth the dishonest steward's fraudulent behavior as a model for ethical behavior but as an example of how shrewdly Jesus' listeners need to handle their affairs in this present age so as to be prepared for the emergency of its end and the advent of the age to come. In context, however, the author of Luke's Gospel has appended to this parable sayings that are in fact ethical. Verses 10-11 were appended on the basis of the shared expression “unrighteous mammon” (16:9,11). The term “mammon” is also the link to 16:13, a verse that appears practically word-for-word in Matthew 6:24. The term “mammon” occurs only in Luke 16:9, 11 // Matthew 6:24 and is a Hebrew (*mamon*) or Aramaic (*mamona'*) word that in both languages means something like “belongings.” In Rabbinic literature the following quotation from *m Avot* 2.17 illustrates this meaning: “Let your colleague's mammon be as dear to you as your own.”