



still waters

home church studies

Psalms 1

[Worship]

1 Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; 2 but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. 3 They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Consider:

[Words]

The replacement of Judas with Matthias in the first chapter of Acts is not administrative busywork for the idle days between ascension and Pentecost. Something more poignant feels at work. In the absence of the Lord, Judas' empty place at the table must be an ache too much to bear, like a branch lopped from the vine, or an open wound in the body. Judas was "numbered" among them. Now their number is incomplete.

Lots are cast to replace him. With credentials only that he was with them from the beginning, Matthias fills an ache and a place and a ministry—an opposite number of austere anonymity—never to be mentioned again in scripture. But the prayer of election falls upon him.

Let us venture to suggest that the prayer of Jesus in John 17 falls upon him as well. It is certain that, even at a distance of time, those in the community of the beloved disciple (see verse 20) experienced this as an intercession for themselves in a dark hour. In the same way, in the mystery of time, we know ourselves prayed for in this passage. The words of Jesus

wash over us in love and also in sober warning: The world will hate them as it has hated me.

Scholars agree that *kosmos* here is not so much the universe or the planet, but the "world" of human social existence and especially that world as fallen, a realm of alienation estranged from God. Walter Wink has suggested "system" as a translation for this special meaning, as in, "My kingdom is not of this system," or, as in the present case, "The world system has hated them because they are not of the system, even as I am not."

Judas is alluded to in the prayer as one lost. His place is already empty. The infiltrator at the table, the agent of the authorities, representative of this world system, has already fled to his work. But the prayer avails nonetheless. Even now we pray it washes over us, pray to know its power.

[Scripture]

John 17.6-18

6 "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.