

Wednesday May 27 th	Genesis 34	59 Oh, come, and let us to the Lord
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Today's hymn is the Scottish metrical version of Psalm 95

- 1 Oh, come, and let us to the Lord
in songs our voices raise,
with joyful noise let us the Rock
of our salvation praise.
- 2 Let us before his presence come
with praise and thankful voice ;
let us sing psalms to him with grace,
and make a joyful noise :
- 3 For God, a great God, and great King,
above all gods he is.
Depths of the earth are in his hand,
the strength of hills is his.
- 4 To him the spacious sea belongs,
for he the same did make ;
the dry land also from his hands
its form at first did take.
- 5 Oh, come, and let us worship him,
let us bow down withal,
and on our knees before the Lord
our Maker let us fall.

The tune 'Irish' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WQQavM_ayk

This is a Psalm of pilgrimage. In his commentary, George Knight describes it this way:

'A group of villagers has come up to Jerusalem, perhaps taking several days to make the pilgrimage, and they are now excitedly gazing at the first set of gates at the top of the great staircase. They are all there, wearing their "Sunday best", children included. They are met by a Temple functionary whom we would call a minister. With joy he welcomes them and invites them to come in: *O come, he says, let us come into his presence with thanksgiving and with songs of praise.*

And so they sing their way into the Temple precincts.'

I once attended the funeral of a friend in a Cathedral. I was

rather anxious about going into that imposing building for a sad occasion. But the door-attendant saw me and beckoned me with 'Come away in'. I instantly felt welcome, and at home. What sort of welcome do we give to people, to our churches or our homes? And are we like the worshippers in the Psalm? - eager, expectant, joyful, worshipful. Or is worship more of a habit or a duty for us?

The antidote to that attitude is in the Psalm: to recall the greatness of God, the creator of heaven and earth.

Today's reading is **Genesis 34**

Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and raped her. His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. And Shechem said to his father Hamor, 'Get me this girl as my wife.'

When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he did nothing about it until they came home.

Then Shechem's father Hamor went out to talk with Jacob. Meanwhile, Jacob's sons had come in from the fields as soon as they heard what had happened. They were shocked and furious, because Shechem had done an outrageous thing in Israel by sleeping with Jacob's daughter - a thing that should not be done.

But Hamor said to them, 'My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves. You can settle among us; the

land is open to you. Live in it, trade in it, and acquire property in it.'

Then Shechem said to Dinah's father and brothers, 'Let me find favour in your eyes, and I will give you whatever you ask. Make the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I'll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the young woman as my wife.'

Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob's sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. They said to them, 'We can't do such a thing; we can't give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. We will enter into an agreement with you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males. Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We'll settle among you and become one people with you. But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we'll take our sister and go.'

Their proposal seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. The young man, who was the most honoured of all his father's family, lost no time in doing what they said, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their city to speak to the men of their city. 'These men are friendly towards us,' they said. 'Let them live in our land and trade in it; the land has plenty of room for them. We can marry their daughters and they can marry ours. But the men will agree to live with us as one people only on the condition that our males be circumcised, as they themselves are. Won't their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours? So let us agree to their terms, and they will settle among us.'

All the men who went out of the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised.

Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male. They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem's house and left. The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where their sister had been defiled. They seized their flocks and herds and donkeys and everything else of theirs in the city and out in the fields. They carried off all their wealth and all their women and children, taking as plunder everything in the houses.

Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have brought trouble on me by making me obnoxious to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed.'

But they replied, 'Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?'

A chapter full of rape, murder, and deceit. Hamor was chief of one of the tribes in Canaan, and his son Shechem forcibly raped Jacob's daughter Dinah, then fell for her and wanted to marry. That led to a marriage alliance between Jacob's family and Hamor's, on one condition: that all the Shechemite men are circumcised. While the men were recovering from this procedure, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, decide to avenge the rape of their sister. They took advantage of the Shechemites' pain and carried out mass slaughter, looting and plundering all their property-

including the women and children. This was not justice, it was bloody vengeance. They did not take the advice of Gilbert & Sullivan to 'let the punishment fit the crime'. Nor would they have heeded the advice of Paul in Romans 12:14-21 (quoting Deuteronomy and Proverbs):

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary:

'If your enemy is hungry, feed them;

if he is thirsty, give them something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on the head.'

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Later, in the death-bed blessings to his family, Jacob says to these two brothers:

*"Simeon and Levi are brothers—
their swords are weapons of violence.*

*Let me not enter their council,
let me not join their assembly,
for they have killed men in their anger
and hamstringed oxen as they pleased.*

*Cursed be their anger, so fierce,
and their fury, so cruel!*

*I will scatter them in Jacob
and disperse them in Israel. (Genesis 49:5-7)*

In later history, unlike the other tribes, Simeon and Levi were not able to occupy any territory of their own. This was to be the cost of their foolish actions. In capturing the territory of others, they lost the right to their own. Poetic justice indeed.

Prayer from former Moderator Rev Angus Morrison
Come, Holy Spirit, to Your world today.

As You brought order out of chaos at the beginning,
brood over the chaos we have created in today's world,
so that people everywhere may learn the way of life as You
intend, and find purpose, meaning and hope.

Where there is oppression and abuse of others, bring Your
justice. Where there is anxiety and fear, bring Your peace.
Where there is hatred and division, bring Your love.

Where the resources of this awesome world are exploited,
and we fail in our calling as trustees of land and sea,
grant us repentance and the grace to learn a better way.
Guide the rulers of the world in ways of justice and
integrity, of truth and peace.

Come, Holy Spirit, to Your Church today.

Breathe into us new life and zeal and delight in the gospel.
Set our hearts on fire with Your love.

Grow Your own fruit in our lives.

As You did that day in Jerusalem,
in all our diversity make us one in truth and love.

Let the gifts of all be valued and used for the common good.
Empower and equip us to bear compelling witness to Jesus'
universal Lordship, by the way we live and speak and serve,
that many will come to know Him for themselves.

Make us unafraid to stand out from the crowd,
and let it be seen that we have been with Jesus.

Come, Holy Spirit, to all who need Your presence today.

Spirit of comfort, be near to all who are sad and lonely.

Spirit of power, give Your strength to those who carry
heavy burdens and are weary on life's journey.

Spirit of peace, speak calm to troubled hearts and minds.

Spirit of life and light, lift from despair those for whom daily life has lost interest, meaning and hope.

Shine the Christ-light into their darkness.

Come, Holy Spirit, and do a new work through the church in this land and in all the world.

Revive us and equip us for those tasks to which Your people in every age and place are called. Sweep Your church forward with new life, new hope, new vision.

May we act ever more closely together, in the rich diversity of the one body of Christ.

So may glory be given to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**