

Scriptures: May 29, 2022

Isaiah 44:9-20 (NRSV)

⁹ All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know. And so they will be put to shame. ¹⁰ Who would fashion a god or cast an image that can do no good? ¹¹ Look, all its devotees shall be put to shame; the artisans too are merely human. Let them all assemble, let them stand up; they shall be terrified, they shall all be put to shame.

¹² The blacksmith fashions it^[a] and works it over the coals, shaping it with hammers, and forging it with his strong arm; he becomes hungry and his strength fails, he drinks no water and is faint. ¹³ The carpenter stretches a line, marks it out with a stylus, fashions it with planes, and marks it with a compass; he makes it in human form, with human beauty, to be set up in a shrine. ¹⁴ He cuts down cedars or chooses a holm tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. ¹⁵ Then it can be used as fuel. Part of it he takes and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Then he makes a god and worships it, makes it a carved image and bows down before it. ¹⁶ Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he roasts meat, eats it, and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, 'Ah, I am warm, I can feel the fire!' ¹⁷ The rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, bows down to it, and worships it; he prays to it and says, 'Save me, for you are my god!'

¹⁸ They do not know, nor do they comprehend; for their eyes are shut, so that they cannot see, and their minds as well, so that they cannot understand. ¹⁹ No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, 'Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted meat and have eaten. Now shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?' ²⁰ He feeds on ashes; a deluded mind has led him astray, and he cannot save himself or say, 'Is not this thing in my right hand a fraud?'

Epistle Reading

Acts 17:16-31 (NRSV)

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the market-place^[a] every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, 'What does this babbler want to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.' (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) ¹⁹ So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?' ²⁰ It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.' ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one ancestor^[b] he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God^[c] and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said,

"For we too are his offspring."

²⁹ Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰ While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

Gospel Reading

Matthew 22:34-40 (NRSV)

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵ and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ ³⁷ He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: “‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’” ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’