



Revised Common Lectionary

Saint Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

The Collect:

Rite I:

We give thee thanks, O Lord of glory, for the example of the first martyr Stephen, who looked up to heaven and prayed for his persecutors to thy Son Jesus Christ, who standeth at thy right hand; where he liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

Rite II:

We give you thanks, O Lord of glory, for the example of the first martyr Stephen, who looked up to heaven and prayed for his persecutors to your Son Jesus Christ, who stands at your right hand; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

First Lesson: Jeremiah 26:1-9,12-15

¹ At the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, this word came from the Lord: ²Thus says the Lord: Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the Lord; speak to them all the words that I command you; do not hold back a word. ³It may be that they will listen, all of them, and will turn from their evil way, that I may change my mind about the disaster that I intend to bring on them because of their evil doings. ⁴You shall say to them: Thus says the Lord: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, ⁵and to heed the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently—though you have not heeded— ⁶then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.

⁷ The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. ⁸And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, "You shall die! ⁹Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, 'This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant?'" And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. ¹²Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people,

saying, “It is the Lord who sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. ¹³Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will change his mind about the disaster that he has pronounced against you. ¹⁴But as for me, here I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. ¹⁵Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the Lord sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.”

Psalm: Psalm 31 or 31:1-5

- ¹ In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame; *
deliver me in your righteousness.
- ² Incline your ear to me; *
make haste to deliver me.
- ³ Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,
for you are my crag and my stronghold; *
for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.
- ⁴ Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, *
for you are my tower of strength.
- ⁵ Into your hands I commend my spirit, *
for you have redeemed me,
O LORD, O God of truth.
- ⁶ [I hate those who cling to worthless idols, *
and I put my trust in the LORD.
- ⁷ I will rejoice and be glad because of your mercy; *
for you have seen my affliction;
you know my distress.
- ⁸ You have not shut me up in the power of the enemy; *
you have set my feet in an open place.
- ⁹ Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; *
my eye is consumed with sorrow,
and also my throat and my belly.
- ¹⁰ For my life is wasted with grief,
and my years with sighing; *
my strength fails me because of affliction,
and my bones are consumed.

- ¹¹ I have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my neighbors,
a dismay to those of my acquaintance; *
when they see me in the street they avoid me.
- ¹² I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind; *
I am as useless as a broken pot.
- ¹³ For I have heard the whispering of the crowd;
fear is all around; *
they put their heads together against me;
they plot to take my life.
- ¹⁴ But as for me, I have trusted in you, O LORD. *
I have said, "You are my God.
- ¹⁵ My times are in your hand; *
rescue me from the hand of my enemies,
and from those who persecute me.
- ¹⁶ Make your face to shine upon your servant, *
and in your loving-kindness save me."
- ¹⁷ LORD, let me not be ashamed for having called upon you; *
rather, let the wicked be put to shame;
let them be silent in the grave.
- ¹⁸ Let the lying lips be silenced which speak against the righteous, *
haughtily, disdainfully, and with contempt.
- ¹⁹ How great is your goodness, O LORD!
which you have laid up for those who fear you; *
which you have done in the sight of all
for those who put their trust in you.
- ²⁰ You hide them in the covert of your presence from those who slander them; *
you keep them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.
- ²¹ Blessed be the LORD! *
for he has shown me the wonders of his love in a besieged city.
- ²² Yet I said in my alarm,
"I have been cut off from the sight of your eyes." *
Nevertheless, you heard the sound of my entreaty
when I cried out to you.
- ²³ Love the LORD, all you who worship him; *
the LORD protects the faithful,
but repays to the full those who act haughtily.
- ²⁴ Be strong and let your heart take courage, *
all you who wait for the LORD.]

Second Lesson: Acts 6:8-7:2a, 51c-60

⁸ Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. ¹⁰But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. ¹¹Then they secretly instigated some men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” ¹²They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. ¹³They set up false witnesses who said, “This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; ¹⁴for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us.” ¹⁵And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

¹ Then the high priest asked him, “Are these things so?” ²And Stephen replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me.

⁵¹”You are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. ⁵²Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. ⁵³You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it.”

⁵⁴ When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. ⁵⁵But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶“Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” ⁵⁷But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.

Gospel: Matthew 23:34-39

³⁴ Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, ³⁵so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. ³⁶Truly I tell you,

all this will come upon this generation. ³⁷“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸See, your house is left to you, desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

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