

THE COLLECT

O ALMIGHTY God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



1. Who orders the unruly wills of sinful men?
A. Almighty _____ (Philippians 2:13)
2. What do we pray that God's people may love?
A. The things which He _____ (Psalm 119:97)
3. What do we pray that we may desire?
A. That which God doth _____ (I Corinthians 2:9)
4. What are the changes of the world?
A. s _____ and m _____ (I Corinthians 7:31)
5. Where ought the hearts of God's people to be fixed?
A. where true _____ are to be found (Psalm 16:11)

INTRODUCTION.

Where did Christ go forty days after His resurrection? He ascended into heaven. and so now the Church begins to lead our thoughts towards heaven. The Collect of today prays that our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found. But do we need to pray for this? Don't we all wish to go to heaven? Yes, but a great many people who hope to go to heaven do not think at all what heaven is like, and would be very miserable if they got there.



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I. CONTRASTS.

A girl, nursing her sick mother, slept and dreamt that she had been taken to heaven in her mother's company. Her mother was happy and "at home," but the girl felt out of place. She had not so far cared for God or for good things, and when she was among them all she could say was "let me out."



There is a fable that a stork (a bird which lives in the mud and eats snails) once met a bird of Paradise, who asked "why do you always grovel in the mud? Why don't you fly up into the sky where all is bright and sunny?" The stork asked, "Are there any snails up there?" You see he had learnt to love mud and snails, and he couldn't be happy without them, even in the sky.

Suppose a beggar boy taken into a palace and told he might live there always. Would he be happy? No; he would be thinking about his awkward habits and dirty clothes, and he would feel uncomfortable and out of place. What is to be done? Our Saxon forefathers used to think that heaven would be a great drinking feast. That was because they found pleasure in such things. American Indians thought that heaven would be a "happy hunting-ground." That is because their pleasure is in having plenty of furry animals to hunt. But we know that such things are not really heaven and will not bring lasting happiness.

What is to be done? The girl must learn to take pleasure in the company and employment which she finds in heaven. The stork must have its nature changed before it can find pleasure in the sky. The beggar boy must either have the palace changed to suit him—but then it wouldn't be a palace any longer, but only a hovel—or he must be changed to suit the palace, that is, he must be made like a prince. Which is better, to change the palace into a hovel, or to change the beggar into a prince?

Now this is just what God wants to do. He cannot alter His heaven to suit us; it would not be heaven any longer: but He can alter us to suit His heaven. And so we pray today that He may alter us, and that we may love the things which He commands, and desire what He promises.

In heaven we will be close to God. God is the Beatific Vision, the source of all goodness and happiness. Only in heaven can we have true happiness, and that happiness will exceed all we can imagine and make our greatest pleasures here on earth seem like nothing. To enter heaven, we need to be cleansed, for there is nothing that defileth heaven. Our nature needs to be changed by God's Holy Spirit, that we may care for heavenly things.

Pray this week's Collect with special fervor, that you may have your heart fixed on that place where true joy is to be found.

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