

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 2nd Sunday of Pentecost, June 11, 2023.

Most of us here today are regulars. That is, we like church, and, more to the point, we like Jesus. At a minimum, he is a really interesting figure. If Jesus was dull, church would be dull, and we wouldn't be here. But you and I, and millions of others, past and present, enjoy engaging this first century carpenter. He is intriguing. He triggers thought. He gets under our skin. And he gets into our hearts and minds.

In short, he invites us to know more about him, including whether he just might be who he claims to be: the Creator of the Universe in human form. Yes, he is beyond us, but he is also with us. In short, he is a really interesting figure. And we are here to testify to that.

Many years before you and I engaged Jesus, Matthew, a first century tax collector, engaged him. Or, more to the point, Jesus engaged Matthew. "As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at a tax booth; and Jesus said to Matthew, "Follow me." (**Matthew 9:9**)

I suspect that you and I have had, if not a comparable experience, at least some inkling that the Risen Christ was speaking to us. Maybe not as clear and as direct as "Follow me," but really inviting at some level. Something or someone entered our lives, maybe overwhelming us, or, more likely, underwhelming us. But with staying power. Maybe simple curiosity. Or maybe, just maybe, an invitation to follow, to learn more, to consider as an option for one's whole life.

Look at the things that Jesus does in today's gospel. He calls Matthew. He engages the Pharisees, the letter-of-the-law folks. He eats with tax collectors and sinners, as well as with the righteous. He heals a woman. He saves a girl from death. It's as if the prophet Hosea (**Hosea 6:1**), many centuries before, knew that Jesus was on his way, not only to represent the Creator, but to be that Creator in human form.

And, for whose sake? Good question. And here's the answer: for our sake, yours and mine. Centuries later, we're here, receiving a really intriguing baton and passing it on to others. It's exciting. And it's why we are here. We want to dig

deeper. We want to know more about this first century carpenter, who appears to have defeated death. In short, the Risen Christ has touched a nerve, and it's quite exciting. Or, at least exciting enough to want to learn more, engage more, study more, visit more, hang out more with other curious folks.

The key verse in the Hosea passage is "I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face. In their distress they will beg my favor." (**Hosea 5:15**) In other words, you can't have forgiveness without confession. It's called repentance.

In his letter to the Romans (**Romans 4:4**), Paul endorses the importance of confession as the key element in recognizing God's forgiveness. God's forgiveness exists, but we don't appreciate that forgiveness if we don't acknowledge why we need it. Again, it's called repentance. "I'm sorry, God. Please forgive me."

Well, God has already forgiven. He has done His part in restoration. But have we done our part? Remember the conclusion to this morning's Gospel passage (**Matthew 9:26**). Jesus "went in and took the girl by her hand, and the girl got up." Jesus initiates the recovery. He offers his hand. And the girl accepts his hand and gets up."

And what happens then? "The report of this saving act spread through that district." And, here we are, twenty centuries later. Jesus continues to offer, and people like you and me continue to accept that offer, and share that Good News with others.

It's a remarkable story, and we – little old us – are part of it. What a privilege, and, yes, what a responsibility.

Which takes us back to why we respond so favorably, not just to the Biblical stories about Jesus, but to our relationship with Jesus. We are intrigued by this first century carpenter not just because he is an interesting historical figure, but because there is a current, active relationship. The Lord's Prayer begins "Our Father," not "Our Footnote."

In today's Epistle to the Romans (**Romans 4:5**), St. Paul reminds us that this relationship is a matter of faith. In other words, we have an active role to play.

God has demonstrated His love for us in a whole bunch of ways. And God has done so in the hope that we will respond with a “thank-you” and a “now Lord, how can I help you?” It’s the theological version of “There’s no such thing as a free lunch.”

But look at what we are expected to pay or re-pay. The Good News is that we have the resources if we choose to apply them. It’s what we can offer. It’s what we’ve been blessed with. What are our gifts and talents? And how can we share those gifts and talents?

One of the great moments in child-raising is hearing from our young adult children these words: “I think I know what I want to do, what I want to study, where I want to live, whom I want to marry, whom I want to help.”

In other words, a vision that is based on the gifts that God has given us and that our parents and friends and neighbors have helped us see and understand and appreciate and apply.

Sometimes, of course, things don’t go as planned or as hoped. And we have to make adjustments. Jesus makes an adjustment in today’s gospel lesson **(Matthew 9:23)**. “When Jesus came to the leader’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, “Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him.”

Sound familiar? But Jesus is not deterred. “But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. And the report of this spread throughout that district.”

Though the “last laugh” was certainly not the aim of Jesus, he did get the “last laugh.” And left us with a very useful life lesson. And it is the summation of all these lessons that makes Jesus such an interesting character. And, more than interesting. Maybe, saving as well.

“And the report of this spread throughout that district.” **(Matthew 9:26)** And, centuries later, here we are. A fluke, or a miracle? Our money is on the latter, isn’t it. Thank you, Lord. *Amen.*

Morning Prayer – Pentecost 2 – June 11, 2023

Hymn 637 – How firm a foundation – stanzas 1-3

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
to you that for refuge to Jesus have fled?

“Fear not, I am with thee; O be not dismayed!
for I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

“When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
the rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
for I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.”

BCP - Page 39 – Day of Pentecost Greeting

Alleluia! Christ is risen.
The Lord has risen indeed. Alleluia!

BCP – Pages 41 – Invitation to Confession

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his Holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us kneel or sit in silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

BCP – Pages 41-42 – Confession and Absolution

*Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep,
we have we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts,
we have offended against thy holy laws,
we have left undone those things which we ought to have done,
and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.*

*But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us,
spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent,
according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord;
And grant, O most merciful father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly,
righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.*

The almighty and merciful Lord, grant us absolution and remission of all our sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

BCP – Page 42 - Gloria

O Lord, open thou our lips.
And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.*

BCP – Pages 44-45 – Venite

O come, let us sing unto the Lord;
 let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
 and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great god,
 and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are all the corners of the earth,
 and the strength of the hills is his also.

The sea is his and he made it,
and his hands prepared the dry land.
O come, let us worship and fall down
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For he is the Lord our God,
and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.
O worship; the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
let the whole earth stand in awe of him.
For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth,
and with righteousness to judge the world and the peoples with his truth.

Psalm 50:7-15

First Reading – Hosea 5:15-6:6

Second Reading – Romans 4:13-25

Hymn 524 – I love thy kingdom, Lord – stanzas 1-3

I love thy kingdom Lord, the house of thine abode,
the Church our blest Redeemer saved with his own precious blood.
For her my tears shall fall; for her my prayers ascend;
to her my cares and toils be given, till toils and cares shall end.
Beyond my highest joy I prize her heavenly ways,
her sweet communion, solemn vows, her hymns of love and praise.

Gospel – Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

BCP – page 53 - The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

*And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,*

Was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven.

and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

*I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

BCP – page 54 – the Lord's Prayer

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.*

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

BCP – page 55 – Suffrages A

O Lord, show thy mercy upon us;
And grant us thy salvation.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness;
And make thy chosen people joyful.

Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;
For only in thee can we live in safety.

Lord, keep this nation under thy care;
And guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let thy way be known upon earth;
Thy saving health among all nations.

Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;
Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Create in us clean hearts, O God;
And sustain us with thy Holy Spirit.

Collect for Pentecost 2

O God, from whom all good proceeds: Grant that by your inspiration we may think those things that are right, and by your merciful guiding may do them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

BCP Prayer for Social Justice

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving spirit may so move every human heart, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

BCP – pages 58-59 - The General Thanksgiving

*Almighty God, Father of all mercies,
we thine unworthy servants
do give thee most humble and hearty thanks
for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men.*

*We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for thine inestimable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.*

*And, we beseech thee,
give us that due sense of all thy mercies,
that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful;
and that we show forth thy praise,
not only with our lips, but in our lives,
by giving up our selves to thy service,
and by walking before thee
in holiness and righteousness all our days;*

*through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost,
be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.*

Announcements

Hymn 717 - America – portions of stanzas 1 and 3

*My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
Long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light;
Protect us by thy might, great God, our King.*

BCP – page 59 – Prayer of St. Chrysostom

*Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our
common supplication unto thee, and hast promised through thy well-beloved Son
that when two or three are gathered together in his Name thou wilt be in the
midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may
be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to
come life everlasting. Amen.*

BCP – page 59 – The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

Hymn 498 – Beneath the cross of Jesus

Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand,
the shadow of a might rock within a weary land,
a home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noon-tide heat and the burden of the day.

Upon the cross of Jesus mine eyes at times can see
the very dying form of one who suffered there for me;
and from my smitten heart with tears wto wonders I confess:
the wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness.

I take, O cross, thy shadow for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of his face;
content to let my pride go by, to know no gain nor loss,
my sinful self my only sham my glory all the cross.

Dismissal

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Lessons for 2nd Sunday of Pentecost – June 11, 2023

Collect: O God, from whom all good proceeds: Grant that by your inspiration we may think those things that are right, and by your merciful guiding may do them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Hosea 5:15-6:6

Thus says the Lord: “I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face. In their distress they will beg my favor: ‘Come, let us return to the Lord; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know, let us press on to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth.’ O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early. Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have killed them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 50:7-15

Hear, O my people, and I will speak:

“O Israel, I will bear witness against you; for I am God your God.

I do not accuse you because of your sacrifices;

your offerings are always before me.

I will take no bull-calf from your stalls,

nor he-goats out of your pens;

For all the beasts of the forest are mine,

the herds in their thousand upon the hills.

I know every bird in the sky,

and the creatures of the field are my sight.

If I were hungry, I would not tell you,

for the whole world is mine and all that is in it.

Do you think I eat the flesh of bulls,
 or drink the blood of goats.?
Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving
 and make good your vows to the Most High.
Call upon me in the day of trouble;
 I will deliver you, and you shall honor me."

Second Reading: Romans 4:13-25

The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations") – in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become, "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now the words, "it was reckoned to him" were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel: Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, if I only touch his cloak, I will be made well. Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, "Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. And the report of this spread through that district.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**