

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, Feast of Pentecost, May 28, 2023.

Today is a special Sunday – even more special than other Sundays – because we recognize both Pentecost and Memorial Day.

It's actually a pretty good fit. On Memorial Day, we honor the sacrifices of those who gave their lives in the service of their country. And on Pentecost, we honor God the Holy Spirit who makes possible sacrifices in the extreme, such as those sacrifices highlighted on Memorial Day.

Now, extreme sacrifice, especially sacrifice unto death, is a very special offering of self. In today's lesson from the Book of Numbers, Eldad and Medad are in conversation with the enlisted men, those in the camp. Moses is in the tent with the elders, the officers, if you will. An assistant to Moses reports that Eldad and Medad are out of line. But Moses knows better. "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!"

This belief of Eldad and Medad, this conviction, was a brave act. They probably weren't expected to step up, but they did. And their bravery was honored by Moses himself.

Pentecost and Memorial Day are about taking risk the name of the Lord. Many of those, if not most of those, have a sense of obedience to a higher calling, with an awareness that there is risk involved. Risk or not, it's duty time. And, over the years, many in the armed forces have exercised their duty and given their lives in fulfillment of that duty.

In today's lesson from First Corinthians, Paul notes that saying yes to God is manifested, is expressed, in all sort of ways, including courage and sacrifice in time of war. Our closing hymn today – Songs of Thankfulness and Praise – includes this phrase: "manifest in valiant fight, quelling all the devil's might."

Sacrifice is a given in wartime. And a huge part of such sacrifice is trust in the One who is urging our sacrifice, who is blessing our sacrifice. For you and me and our nation, national service at its best is saying "Yes, to God." Not just "yes" to the

President as Commander, but “yes” to the One who created us with the ability to serve and who blesses our service.

Memorial Day is a holy day because, at its heart, it is God saying that sacrifice is needed, maybe even the ultimate sacrifice. And those who responded with their lives are the ones whom we honor on Memorial Day.

God is not a God of War. God is a God of Sacrifice in search of Peace. And, when War is inevitable, God steps up. War is not the absence of God, but the continued presence of God.

Today’s reading from the Gospel of John reminds us that the Goal of God for each of us – in wartime or peacetime – is Peace. “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

You and I are commissioned. We are officers in God’s Army, if you will. We have signed up for duty and we have been assigned duty. The arenas are many. Land, air and sea. Even space. Inner city and country. Young and not-so-young. And all colors of the rainbow.

Yet St. Paul reminds us that all of us “are activated by the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.”

Well, what is our role in this scheme of things? Not our scheme of things, mind you, but God’s scheme of things. Our job descriptions are on file somewhere, and each has a Divine component. That’s what you and I search for when we gather, when we sing, when we serve, when we mix and share and contribute. We’re listening for a hint as to how we can do justice to our commissioning as soldiers in God’s army.

It’s a good feeling to be commissioned, isn’t it? We’re proud that the Lord has invited us and welcomed us and, yes, commissioned us.

Pentecost and Memorial Day. Yes indeed, they go together. The Gift of the Holy Spirit and the Assignment to Sacrifice. And – maybe the most important element of all – the Assurance that God will be with us as we exercise our sacrificial assignments. Some have lost their lives in fulfilling their assignments. We

remember them today. For others, assignments are in the making, including all of us here today. And so we remember ourselves as we seek to fulfill our sacrificial duty, whatever that might be.

Pentecost. Fifty days after Easter. That's the narrow definition. The broader definition is Whenever and Wherever the Lord needs us.

Narrow or broad, Pentecost is always timely and applicable. The need to sacrifice doesn't sleep. And that's a blessing in itself. We need that blessing, because it's a challenging time in the life of our nation and the world and in our individual lives. The good news, as we face these challenges, is that we have one another. And the even greater news is that God has our individual backs and our collective back.

This Divine Love doesn't quit, even when we are down. So, if we're discouraged, we need to get up and renew our efforts. There's plenty of work to do, individually and as a community. And always in the company of the Risen Lord.

It's Pentecost. Which suggests two things. First, a statement: the Holy Spirit is calling us to sacrificial service. And second, a question: can you feel the Wind behind our backs? And here's the answer to that question: "Yes, Lord, we feel the Spirit. And, in the Name of your Son, Jesus, we remain ready to serve.

Amen.

Morning Prayer – Pentecost - May 28, 2023

Hymn 595 – God of grace and God of glory

God of grace and God of glory, on thy people pour thy power;
crown thine ancient Church's story; bring her bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour.

Lo! the hosts of evil round us scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
from the fears that long have bound us free our hearts to faith and praise:
grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the living of these days.

Cure thy children's warring madness, bend our pride to thy control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;
let the gift of thy salvation be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving thee whom we adore.

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 104:25-35, 37

First Reading – Numbers 11:24-30

Second Reading – I Corinthians 12:3b-13

Hymn 579 – Almighty Father, strong to save

Almighty Father, strong to save, whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea.

O Chirst, the Lord of hill and plain o'er which our traffic runs amain
by mountain pass or valley low; wherever, Lord the people go,
protect them by thy guarding hand from every peril on the land.

O spirit, whom the Father sent to spread abroad the firmament;
O Wind of heaven, by thy might save all who dare the eagle's flight,
and keep them by thy watchful care from every peril in the air.

O Trinity of love and power, our people shield in danger's hour;
from rock and tempest, fire and foe, protect them whereso e'er they go;
thus evermore shall rise to thee glad praise from space, air, land, and sea.

Gospel – John 20:19-23

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

O God, who on this day taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through Jesus Christ your son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen* .

BCP Collect for Sundays

O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; 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 my 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.*

Prayer Book for the Armed Services – page 52

*Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women
of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with your heavenly
grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the
perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they
may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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 135 – Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

Song of thankfulness and praise, Jesus, Lord, to thee we raise,
manifested by the star to the sages from afar;
branch of royal David's stem in thy birth at Bethlehem;
anthems be to thee addressed, God in man made manifest.

Manifest at Jordan's stream, Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;
and at Cana, wedding-guest, in thy Godhead manifest.
manifest in power divine, changing water into wine;
anthems be to thee addressed, God in man made manifest.

Manifest in making whole palsied limbs and fainting soul;
manifest in valiant fight, quelling all the devil's might;
manifest in gracious will, every bringing good from ill;
anthems be to thee addressed, God in man made manifest.

Manifest on mountain height, shining in resplendent light,
where disciples filled with awe thy transfigured glory saw.
When from there thou leddest them steadfast to Jerusalem,
cross and Easter Day attest God in man made manifest.

Dismissal

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

Lessons for Pentecost – Sunday, May 28, 2023

Collect: O God, who on this day taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Numbers 11:24-30

Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again. Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone into the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, “My lord Moses, stop them!” But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!” And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

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

Psalm 104:25-35, 37

O Lord, how manifold are your works?!

in wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Yonder is the great and wide sea with its living things too many to number,
creatures both small and great.

There move the ships, and there is that Leviathan,
which you have made for the sport of it.

All of them look to you
to give them their food in due season.

You give it to them; they gather it;
you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.
You hide your face, and they are terrified;
You take away their breath, and they die and return to their dust.
You send forth your Spirit, and they are created;
and so you renew the face of the earth.
May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;
may the Lord rejoice in all his works.
He looks at the earth and it trembles;
he touches the mountains and they smoke.
I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
I will praise my God while I have my being.
May these words of mine please him;
I will rejoice in the Lord.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.
Hallelujah!

Second Reading: I Corinthians 12:3b-13

No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free –and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

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

Gospel: John 20:19-23

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

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