

**Service of Holy Communion**  
**Fourth Sunday after Epiphany - January 29, 2023**

**Hymn 587 – Our Father, by whose Name**

Our Father, by whose Name all fatherhood is known,  
who dost in love proclaim each family thine own,  
bless thou all parents, guarding well, with constant love as sentinel,  
the homes in which thy people dwell.

O Christ, thyself a child within an earthly home,  
with heart still undefiled, though didst to manhood come;  
our children bless, in every place, that they may all behold thy face,  
and knowing thee may grow in grace.

O Spirit, who dost bind our hearts in unity,  
who teachest us to find the love from self set free,  
in all our hearts such love increase, that every home, by this release,  
may be the dwelling place of peace.

**Page 355**

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
*And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.*

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.*  
*Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,*  
*we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*  
*Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,*  
*you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;*  
*you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.*  
*For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,*  
*you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,*  
*in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

The Lord be with you.  
And also with you.  
Let us pray.

### **Collect for Epiphany 4**

Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things both in heaven and on earth: mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and in our time grant us your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **First Reading – Micah 6:1-8**

### **Psalm 15**

### **Second Reading – I Corinthians 1:18-31**

### **Hymn 467 – Sing, my soul, his wondrous love**

Sing, my soul, his wondrous love, who, from yon bright throne above,  
ever watchful o'er our race still to us extends his grace.

Heaven and earth by him were made; all is by his scepter swayed;  
what are we that he should show so much love to us below?

God, the merciful and good, bought us with the Savior's blood.  
and, to make salvation sure, guides us by his Spirit pure.

Sing, my soul, adore his Name! Let his glory be thy theme:  
praise him till he calls thee home; trust his love for all to come.

### **Gospel – Matthew 5:1-12**

### **Sermon**

## **Nicene Creed – page 358**

*We believe in one God,  
the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again In accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

## Prayers of the People Form IV – page 388

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, Almighty God, that all who confess your Name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one another and serve the common good.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours, and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your will for them may be fulfilled; and we pray that we may share with all your saints in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

## **Confession and Absolution – page 360**

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

## **The Peace – page 360**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
*And also with you.*

## **Announcements and Prepare the Altar**

### **Eucharistic Prayer – page 361**

The Lord be with you.  
*And also with you.*

Lift up your hearts.  
*We lift them to the Lord.*

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*It is right to give him thanks and praise*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

*Hosanna in the highest.*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: this is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

*Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.*

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him.

Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **Lord's Prayer**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

*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.*

### **Breaking of the Bread**

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.  
*Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.*

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

### **Communion**

#### **Post Communion Prayer – BCP page 365**

*Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## **Blessing**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

## **Hymn 573 – Father eternal, Ruler of creation**

Father eternal, ruler of Creation,  
spirit of life, which moved ere form was made,  
through the thick darkness covering every nation,  
light to our blindness, O be though our aid:  
thy kingdom come, O Lord, thy will be done.

Races and peoples, lo, we stand divided,  
and, sharing not our griefs, no joy can share;  
by wars and tumults love is mocked, derided;  
his saving cross no nation yet will bear;  
thy kingdom come, O Lord, thy will be done.

Envious of heart, blind-eyed, with tongues confounded,  
nation by nation still goes unforgiven,  
in wrath and fear, by jealousies surrounded,  
building proud towers which shall not ..... reach to heaven;  
thy kingdom come, O Lord, thy will be done.

## **Dismissal**

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



## Lessons for 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany – January 29, 2023

**Collect:** Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things both in heaven and on earth: Mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and in our time grant us your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **First Reading: Micah 6:1-8**

Hear what the Lord says: “Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel.” “O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.” “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with then thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of your but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

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

### **Psalm 15**

Lord, who may dwell in your tabernacle?  
*who may abide upon your holy hill?*  
Whoever leads a blameless life and does what is right,  
*who speaks the truth from his heart.*  
There is no guile upon his tongue; he does no evil to his friend;  
*he does not heap contempt upon his neighbor.*  
In his sight the wicked is rejected,  
*but he honors those who fear the Lord.*

He has sworn to do no wrong  
*and does not take back his word.*  
He does not give his money in hope of gain,  
*nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.*  
Whosoever does these things  
*shall never be overthrown.*

### **Second Reading: First Corinthians 18-31**

The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is lower and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast on the Lord."

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

### **Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12**

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:  
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are

those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

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

**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday or Epiphany, January 29, 2023.**

As you know, our colleague, Dan Meck, is now covering every 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday. There are handful of 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays, including today. But Dan could not be here because of an Achilles tear. We wish Dan well in his recovery. He is motoring around the St. Paul's campus on a knee-scooter. Imagine trying to navigate the buildings and grounds at St. Christopher's on a knee-scooter.

I suspect that Dan is disappointed for several reasons, including getting to preach on a very interesting and familiar set of lessons.

From the prophet Micah (**Micah 6:8**): "O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."

From today's Psalm (**Psalm 15:3**): "There is no guile upon his tongue; he does no evil to his friend; he does not heap contempt upon his neighbor."

From Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (**I Corinthians 1:18**): "The message about the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

And from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel (**Matthew 5:12**): "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

You and I are here in this place and other houses of worship because 1) we savor a challenge – "do justice, love kindness, walk humbly" - and 2) we savor second chances – the "power of God." Oh yes, following Jesus is a challenge, to be sure, but the same Jesus picks us up when we stumble and sends us on our way with renewed confidence. To do what? To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

It's no accident that, each time we gather, we confess, and then are reassured. That combination is our spiritual fuel of choice. That's what keeps us going. That's our knee-scooter. And it's not your basic knee-scooter. No, it has bells and

whistles. It can travel up a stone walkway. It can navigate steps. It can move forwards and laterally. It can stand up and sit down and even kneel. It can get in and out of vehicles. Indeed it is a vehicle in itself.

Confession and assurance. Imagine life without those experiences. What we might call the Weight – w e i g h t – of Sin. Heaviness, pressing down, not letting us up. Spiritual suffocation, if you will. It's tough just to talk about that condition.

No thank you. I'd rather "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly." Or, at least give this threesome a chance. I'll take my chances with the Lord. I'll stumble, but he'll be there to help me up, and so will his disciples. You all. We all. A community of believers. A community of trusters. A community of service in thanksgiving for the Lord's forgiveness, and yet another chance to do His work. A condition today's **Collect** calls simply "peace." **Peace** of mind, **peace** of heart, **peace** of soul. A comforting **peace**.

And this peace is a gift. We don't earn it. We receive it, and then give thanks. And how do we give thanks? J,K,H. Justice, kindness, humility. Thank you, Prophet Micah. Thank you, Jesus. It makes us want to sing what we just sang (**Hymn 467**): "Sing my soul, his wondrous love, who, from yon bright throne above, ever watchful o'er our race, still to us extends his grace."

This sounds "too good to be true," doesn't it? We have our doubts, don't we? Are we being led astray? Could Satan be responsible for religious faith. He lulls us to sleep. He pulls the wool over our eyes. He makes us believe that there really is a God and that this God entered our lives as a carpenter from Nazareth and that this carpenter died for our sins and rose from the dead to be with us forever.

Well, even these worries, these concerns, these what-ifs, haven't stopped you and me from believing that God is indeed good, and would never, ever betray our trust. Enter today's passage from Matthew's Gospel (**Matthew 5:1-12**). What we know as the Sermon on the Mount. It's one of the great assurances of faith.

There are nine – count them – "blessed are" assurances. And these assurances resonate with us. We know them. We have felt "poor in spirit." We have "mourned." We are "meek." We "hunger and thirst for righteousness." We can

be “merciful.” We can be “pure in heart.” We can be “peace-makers.” We can feel “persecuted for righteousness sake.” We can be “reviled and persecuted and accused falsely.”

And what does Jesus tell us do in response to all these possibilities? “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.” **(Matthew 5:12)**

Now, we could flip these assurances and see them as reasons to give up on the Lord. Nine excuses that we might offer for resisting the Love of God. But, guess what. We are here. Not to wallow in the negative, but to rejoice and be glad in the positive.

Faith is an anchor, which is a huge gift to you and me and to all those with whom we share our faith. By Divine design, you and I are custodians of the Risen Christ. And the way in which we fulfill our custodial responsibility is not to hide God’s Son, but to lift him up so that others might see what we see, what we feel, what we have tested and confirmed. What an absolute honor to share the Christ Child, the Christ Adult, and the Risen Christ.

One might say that the Lord Jesus is the Creator’s greatest gift to people like Micah, like Paul, like the Psalmist “who speaks the truth from his heart,” and, yes, like you and me, right here, in this time and place, who do our best, given our fallen nature, to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.”

We pray to the Lord, “Grant us your peace.” And, guess what. The Lord has done just that. To which we say with deep thanks “Amen!”