

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 13th Sunday after Pentecost, August 27, 2023.

As you have observed no doubt, I try to reference in the weekly sermon the five entries on the insert. There is the Collect, what we might call the “gathering prayer.” In addition, there are four passages from Scripture: Old Testament, Psalm, Epistle and Gospel. By design, these passages tell a story or at least part of The Story. They are not randomly selected. They are carefully chosen by scholars and editors to make a point, highlight a season, challenge the reader and the hearer, and comfort the reader and hearer.

For whatever reason, when I approached today’s insert, I thought of you all, not just as hearers of the Collect and four passages, but as authors of the Collect and four passages and preachers of the Collect and four passages. How would you deliver these five selections? What events from your lives would you cite to convey their meaning? What passion would you bring to your congregation?

As veteran church-goers, you probably do this anyway, but privately. You “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” what is appointed for a given Sunday. Indeed this language is the basis for one of our Sunday collects. What you don’t do necessarily is to share what you “inwardly digest.” You listen carefully and process what you hear or read. But not often, I suspect, do you share your insights and conclusions and questions with others. You don’t preach on the insert, at least in a formal way.

Now, some of you, maybe many, maybe all, do read and deliver them as lessons for yourselves. But, as readers and deliverers, you don’t try to interpret them for others, at least not publicly. Perhaps in a prayer group or Bible Study, but on Sunday morning from the pulpit? That’s what you hire the preacher for.

But what if you were the preacher? What would be your sermon today? The theme of today’s passage from Isaiah is “Listen to me.” Why and how would you recommend to friends and neighbors and visitors that they listen to the Word of God?

Well, what you might cite as a reason to “listen to God” are several verses from today’s Psalm (**Psalm 138.4**). “When I called you, you answered me; you increased my strength within me.” Assuming that this is true - namely that if we call, God will listen and we will be stronger because of it - why wouldn’t we listen? It makes perfect sense.

And how would you handle the passage from **Romans 12:1-8**? According to Paul, we are blessed with certain gifts. And these gifts vary from person to person. Put them together and you have a really interesting community. You inform one another, you help one another, you challenge one another, you benefit from one another’s gifts. Each person is valued. What’s not to like?

Which leads us to the passage from Matthew (**Matthew 16:13**), which has a different flavor. Not mutual benefit, but personal responsibility. “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.” You’re a leader, a spokesperson, a very special representative. Not lost in the crowd, where people don’t see you, but at the head of the crowd, where everything you do and say is on display. “I am counting on you, Peter, to step up and lead. Here are the keys to the Kingdom. Now, go to work. And, not to worry, I’ll be by your side.”

Are we ready for this? Are we ready, not just to read about Jesus, but to go to work for Jesus and with Jesus? Not passive recipients, but active participants. Not just followers, but leaders as well.

I think I can answer for you, for us. Bring it on, Jesus! Or, more accurately, “Continue to bring it on, Jesus!”

This little chapel has been the home for a hundred years to those moved to “bring it on.” You all and your predecessors have answered the bell. You have stepped up and represented the Lord in all sorts of way, formal and informal. You have kept the Good News alive. Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” And you have done exactly that. More power to you, more power to us.

And not just power, but responsibility. It’s not enough to bask in the work of others over this last 100 years. We, as the current generation, have work to do. A new generation to educate, to challenge, to care for, to join us in representing the Lord. Not just on this Island, but everywhere we go. Not necessarily by

preaching the Word of God to a few, but by living outwardly in view of many in a manner that would please the Lord.

Both approaches are welcomed by our Lord. Not only sharing our faith verbally, but in all dimensions of our daily living. A lifestyle, if you will, that models, that expresses, that represents, what we believe. Isn't it true that more people will watch us rather than ask us. And what they observe might well be a marker in their search for deeper meaning.

You and I as markers? Imagine that. At a minimum, we are humbled. At a maximum, we are scared. My guess is that most of us are somewhere in between.

But, ready or not, we just might get the call. The Holy Spirit doesn't just sit around waiting for us to knock. No, the Holy Spirit is the knock. "Wake up, there is work to do."

Again, there is probably some version of this Spirit-initiated conversation in every one of our lives. That phenomenon in itself is intriguing, inviting, inspiring. Put us together and we have a congregation. Not all like-minded, but perhaps, just perhaps, all tapped on the shoulder by the same God. A hundred years and counting. Lots of tapping, and lots of responding, with more to come.

Sounds like, feels like, maybe, just maybe, is like what Isaiah describes: "Look to the rock from which you are hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many."

At the one-hundred year mark, St. Christopher-by-the-Sea continues to respond to that Holy Spirit knock. What an honor to be so tapped. Makes us want to sing "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." Which we will do as our final hymn today.

In conclusion, more power to you, more power to us, more power to this wonderful chapel and the Island community it serves. Keep up the good work!

Amen.

Morning Prayer – Pentecost 13 – August 27, 2023

Hymn 525, stanzas 1-3 – The Church’s One Foundation

The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation by water and the word:
from heaven he came and sought here to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

Elect from every nation, yet one o’er all the earth,
her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy Name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder men see her sore oppressed,
by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed;
yet saints their watch are keeping, their cry goes up, “How long?
and soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

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 138

First Reading – Isaiah 51:1-6

Second Reading – Romans 12:1-8

Hymn 524 – I love thy kingdom Lord

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 praise her heavenly ways,
her sweet communion, solemn vows, her hymns of love and praise.

Jesus, though friend divine, our Savior and our King,
thy hand from every snare and foe shall great deliverance bring.

Sure as thy truth shall last, to Zion shall be given
the brightest glories earth can yield, and brighter bliss of heaven.

Gospel – Matthew 16:13-20

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 13

Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; 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 Sunday– page 835

O God our King, by the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ on the first day of the week, you conquered sin, put death to flight, and gave us the hope of everlasting life: Redeem all our days by this victory; forgive our sins, banish our fears, make us bold to praise you and to do your will; and steel us to wait for consummation of your kingdom on the last great Day; through the same 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.*

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 362 – Holy, holy, holy

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crown around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
which wert, and art, and ever more shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
all thy works shall praise thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Dismissal

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

Lessons for 13th Sunday after Pentecost – August 27, 2023

Collect: Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Isaiah 51:1-6

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her dessert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples. I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 138

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart;

before the gods I will sing your praise.

I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise our Name,

because of your love and faithfulness;

For you have glorified your Name

and your word above all things.

When I called, you answered me;

you increased my strength within me.

All the kings of the earth will praise you, O Lord,
when they have heard the words of your mouth.
They will sing of the ways of the Lord,
that great is the glory of the Lord.
Though the Lord be high, he cares for the lowly;
he perceives the haughty from afar.
Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe;
*you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand
shall save me.*
The Lord will make good his purpose for me;
O Lord, your love endures for ever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

Second Reading: Romans 12:18

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

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

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are

you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he as the Messiah.

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