

Service of Holy Communion Pentecost 7 – July 16, 2023

Hymn 469 – There's a wideness in God's mercy

There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice, which is more than liberty.
There is welcome for the sinner, and more graces for the good;
there is mercy with the Savior; there is healing in his blood.

There is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than up in heaven;
there is no place where earth's failings have such kindly judgment given.
There is plentiful redemption in the blood that has been shed;
there is joy for all the members in the sorrows of the Head.

For the love of God is broader than the measure of the mind;
and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful, we should take him at this word;
and our life would be thanksgiving for the goodness of the Lord.

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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.

Pentecost 7 Collect

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Reading – Isaiah 55:10-13

Psalm 65:1-14

Second Reading – Romans 8:1-11

Hymn 302 – Father, we thank thee

Father, we thank thee who hast planted thy holy Name within our hearts.
Knowledge and faith and life immortal Jesus thy Son to us imparts.
Thou, Lord, didst make all for thy pleasure, didst give us food for all our days,
giving in Christ the Bread eternal; thine is the power, be thine the praise.

Watch o'er thy Church, O Lord, in mercy, save it from evil, guard it still,
perfect it in thy love, unite it, cleansed and conformed unto thy will.
As grain, once scattered on the hillsides, was in the broken bread made one,
so from all lands thy Church be gathered into thy kingdom by thy Son.

Gospel – Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Sermon

The Rev. Charles Rowins

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 Preparation of the Table

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 pge 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.*

Hymn 473 – Lift high the cross

*Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred Name.*

Led on their way by this triumphant sign, the hosts of God in conquering ranks
combine. *Refrain*

Each new-born servant of the Crucified bears on the brow the seal of him who
died. *Refrain.*

O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree, as thou has promised, draw the world to
thee. *Refrain.*

So shall our song of triumph ever be: praise to the Crucified for victory. *Refrain.*

Dismissal

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

Lessons for 7th Sunday after Pentecost – July 16, 2023

Collect: O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-13

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

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

Psalm 65:1-14

You are to be praised, O God, in Zion’;

to you shall vows be performed in Jerusalem.

To you that hear prayer shall all flesh come,

because of their transgressions.

Our sins are stronger than we are,

but you will blot them out.

Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there!

they will be satisfied by the beauty of your house, by the holiness of your temple.

Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation,

O Hope of all the ends of the earth and of the seas that are far away.

You make fast the mountains by your power;

they are girded about with might.

You still the roaring of the seas,

the roaring of their waves, and the clamor of the people.

Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your marvelous signs;

you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.

Your visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous;

the river of God is full of water.

You prepare the grain,

for so you provide for the earth.

You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges;

with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase.

You crown the year with your goodness,

and your paths overflow with plenty.

May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing,

and the hills be clothed with joy.

May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with rain;

let them shout for joy and sing.

Second Reading: Romans 8:1-11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind of the flesh is death, but set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law – indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

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

The Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Jesus went out and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil,, and they spring up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, there were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen! Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

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, 7th Sunday after Pentecost, July 16, 2023.

Last week we spent some time looking at the lesson insert, in particular at some phrases that were capitalized and seemed to tell a story. Well, think of today as Lesson Insert Part 2. And think of yourself as the preacher for today.

Does anything from the insert lessons jump off the page for you? Did something in the lessons make you want to share an insight or a question?

This little exercise is routine for a preacher, but not necessarily routine for those in the pews. But it could be routine. Don't wait for the preacher to highlight something. Highlight something yourself. And then compare it with what you hear from the pulpit. Often your insights will echo those of the preacher. Indeed, your insights might be far more interesting than those you hear from the preacher.

Echo or new, don't be shy about sharing your experience, your understandings. Growth is often the result of sharing. So, as is done weekly, let me share a bit about today's lessons, keeping in mind that your insights about these lessons are even more important.

From Isaiah: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle." These positive outcomes are the result of you and me receiving blessings and then sharing blessings. It's how God works.

And it is how God wants us to work. Receive with thanks and then share with hope and confidence. In other words, be the "good" soil that today's lesson from the Gospel of Matthew describes.

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul's version of this transaction is the recognition that the Risen Christ is in us, with an expectation to share this Good News. We are "free from the law of sin and death," Paul writes. Not that we don't experience sin and death – we know better - but that sin and death are not the final answer. God's love is the Answer, both final and current, if we allow it.

Today's Psalm describes this love as "clothed with joy." Now, think of a closet with all sorts of options, "joy" being one of them. But this joy option is not meant

simply to hang in a closet. It is meant to be worn. And we are the ones who need say yes to this option. We need to go to the closet, find the “joy” option, and wear it with confidence and thanksgiving. It’s getting dressed for church, which goes well beyond an hour on Sunday morning. We are representing the Lord wherever we go.

Engaging the Word of God – the Bible – and in particular getting to know Jesus a little better – the Gospels - is what we do here. It is what has been going on for centuries. And, it just might be the Creator of the Universe – hard to imagine I know – reaching out to us individually and collectively for the purpose of spiritual and intellectual fulfillment and community responsibility.

Fulfillment and responsibility. We want to know how and why things began and how and why things are going the way they are going and how and why things might change for the better – with our help.

All humans are curious creatures. In addition, you and I are really curious about a first century carpenter named Jesus. And that’s not an accident. The availability of Jesus is highly intentional on God’s part. God wants us to know Jesus. It’s that simple.

And not just know about, but worship. And not just worship in word only, but emulate the Lord’s Love in all that we do. All of us can contribute to the well-being of the Creation. Our piece of the Creative pie might be small in size, but enormous in the eyes of God. And it is God after all whom we are trying to honor and please.

Isn’t it interesting that, in talking about God - the Big Picture, if you will - we end up talking about ourselves. There is a name for this phenomenon. It’s called Prayer. “Dear God, it is Charles again. Sorry to bother you, but I’m still in need of some time with you. I find our prayer time very special, and maybe that’s what you expect. So, here goes.”

“I want first to thank you, Lord, for all your blessings. Then I want to say I’m sorry for sometimes taking those blessings for granted or for misusing them or missing them entirely. And next – not last, but next – I want to ask your help as I try to do better. And then – not finally, but then – I want to ask you to continue to help me

as I continue to try do to better. And when I stumble again, which I surely will, I ask for your forgiveness again so that I can try all over again.

I guess what I'm saying, Lord, is that I really appreciate the "Again" in you. You could choose "One and done" as your motto. But no, you have chosen "Again, Again, and Again." This is the Holy Spirit in you, Lord. That dimension of you that keeps us going, keeps us alert to your Will, and keeps us on track to be your special agents in the Created Order.

And, as "special agents," shouldn't we wear a badge? Well, of course we should. And we do. It's called baptism. The Cross that was marked on our foreheads gives us not only the authority to care for God's Creation, including one another, but the joy. It's quite an honor, isn't it? For which we say again "Thank you, Lord."

A final thought. We've been talking about weekly inserts. Those front and back pages containing the lessons for a given Sunday. But what if we take the notion of insert to another level? Not just a piece of paper, but a living insert, if you will.

You're not suggesting that we are living inserts, are you, Mr. Preacher?

Yes, I am. We make the written word come alive, not only by how we live, but how well we inspire others to live. Listen to the words from the baptismal service: "open their hearts to your grace and truth ... fill them with your holy and life-giving Spirit ... keep them in the faith and communion of your holy Church ... teach them to love others in the power of the Spirit ... send them into the world in witness to your love." Our final hymn today uses the phrase "draw the world to thee."

"Open, fill, keep, teach, send, draw." These expectations are directed at you and me, with the understanding and trust that how we respond to these directives makes a difference.

Oh yes, we have the capacity and the self-proclaimed responsibility to be "living inserts." It's actually pretty exciting. A lot of work, but what great satisfaction to walk the walk and talk the talk with the Lord Himself. And with one another! That's the really special part, isn't it? Amen.

