

**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, August 13, 2023.**

Here's the theme for today's lessons. "Careful what you ask for." Especially when we think that God is not there to help us complete a task.

In our first lesson (**I Kings 19:10**) Elijah is depressed. He has done all that the Lord has asked him to do, and the people are not thankful. "I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." What is the Lord's response? The Lord gives Elijah even more to do. "You want more? I'll give you more. Anoint Jehu and Elisha and put them to work."

In today's Epistle (**Romans 10:14**), Paul, speaking for the Lord, gives the early Christians in Rome even more to do. "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim?" The message: Get back to work. There is plenty to do.

In today's Gospel (**Matthew 14:30**), Jesus asks Peter to join him in the boat. Peter starts out, but is frightened by the wind and pleads with the Lord, "Save me." Jesus does save Peter, but not before saying to Peter "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

When you and I pray, do we sometimes ask for too much? Do we sometimes ask for Jesus to make up the difference between starting a job and finishing a job? Do we sometimes recognize that our trust in the Lord is a bit shaky? Yes, we can be impatient, even when we are the ones who asked for an assignment and then complained when the assignment was tougher than we imagined.

Fortunately for you and me, God is used to handling complaints. Yes, God receives praise and thanksgiving. But God also receives the occasional "Dear Lord, give me a break. All those people whom you want me to help ... Many of them don't recognize the help, and, even among those who recognize the help, the gratitude doesn't last. And it bugs me. It makes me not want to help at all." To which God responds "Are you upset with them or with me?"

At which point, we take a deep breath and confess to God that our anger is self-directed. We know better. We know that you, Lord, don't ask of us anything more than we can handle. You, Lord, handled the Big Cross. We can handle or at least help with the little ones.

Back to our theme: "Be careful what you ask for." "Little crosses" are still crosses. There is still the potential for pain, not only for others, but for ourselves. And, if that pain is real, even though modified or subdued, can we handle it? Maybe the "little cross" is bigger than we thought. Maybe we can't handle the pain. Here we were worried about the Cross Jesus hung on, and we can't even find time for a neighbor or a stranger or a family member or a condition crying out for help.

Well, welcome to the human condition, which ironically is made tougher because we have Jesus as our leader. His expectations are high. Love God and love neighbor. "Easy for you to say, Jesus. You are God. We are not. Maybe if someone else was our leader, you wouldn't ask so much of us."

Is this what we want? An easier human condition? A different leader with smaller expectations? Jayvee rather than varsity? I don't think so, and you don't either. We're here. That's the way we like it. Not always easy. Indeed maybe never easy. But we wouldn't want it any other way. So, let's keep going. You keep challenging, God. And we'll keep trying. After all, it's not as if there is never rest time or a water break. Can you say "prayer" and "communion"?

In our first reading today, Elijah is tired and spends the night in a cave (**I Kings 19:9**). He needs a break. And guess what happens. "Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" Elijah responds "The Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." The short version is "I've had it, Lord. I can't keep going."

The Lord's response is not "I understand, Elijah. I'll ask someone else to help." No, the Lord gives Elijah even more to do, not less.

Sound familiar? Ever tried to tell God "Go ask somebody else"? It doesn't work, does it? God might provide help, clearer directions, best practices, teammates.

But God doesn't say "Not to worry, I'll try someone else. You do your thing, I'll do mine." God might well get others to help, but it's never in lieu of you and me. In addition to? Yes. But never in lieu of.

Which just happens to be one of the reasons you and I are here. God keeps calling. And we keep listening. And, in addition to listening, we keep trying our best. But we know that we are at "our best" when we have teammates. And, we do - right here. We keep one another on our toes. When one is down, another is up. When one is tired, another is renewed. When one is satisfied with jayvee, another invites us to a voluntary practice, with varsity in sight.

And whom do we meet at that voluntary practice? We meet the Lord, the Coach, who doesn't ask of us any more than the Coach asks of self. And how does the Coach greet us? In the same way Jesus greeted Peter in today's gospel. "Take heart, it is I; do be afraid."

And so the voluntary practice commenced, and here we are. Perhaps tired, but renewed. And in the presence of the Lord himself. And what do we say to Coach Jesus? "Lord, put me in. I think I'm ready." And what does Coach Jesus say to you and me? "You better be ready. The enemy is tough. So, there's a lot to do. But I will be with you. And, together, we will make a difference."

Our final hymn today – 664 - reinforces this theme of God as difference maker. The hymn begins with this phrase: "My Shepherd will supply my need, Jehovah is his Name." And ends with this phrase: "No more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home." In other words, safe with the Lord.

Amen.

## Morning Prayer – Pentecost 11 – August 13, 2023

### Hymn 665, stanzas 1-4 – All my hope on God is founded

All my hope on God is founded; he doth still my trust renew,  
ne through change and chance he guideth, only good and only true.  
God unknown, he alone calls my heart to be his own.

Mortal pride and earthly glory, sword and crown betray our trust;  
though with care and toil we build them, tower and temple fall to dust.  
But God's power, hour by hour, is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness e'er endureth, deep his wisdom passing thought:  
splendor, light, and life attend him, beauty springeth out of nought.  
Evermore from his store new-born worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty Giver bounteous gifts on us bestow;  
his desire our soul delighteth, pleasure leads us where we go.  
Love doth stand at his hand; joy doth wait on his command.

### 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 85:8-13**

### **First Reading – I Kings 19:9-18**

### **Second Reading – Romans 10:5-15**

### **Hymn 441, stanzas 1-3 – In the cross of Christ I glory**

In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time;  
All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'er take me, hope deceive, and fears annoy,  
Never shall the cross forsake me: lo, it glows with peace and joy.

When the sun of bliss is beaming light and love upon my way,  
From the cross the radiance streaming adds new luster to the day.

### **Gospel – Matthew 14:22-33**

### **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 11**

Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without you, may, by you, be enabled to live according to your will; 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 Guidance— page 832**

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light riseth up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what thou wouldest have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in thy light we may see light, and in thy straight Path may not stumble; 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 664 – My shepherd will supply my need**

My Shepherd will supply my need, Jehovah is his Name;  
in pastures fresh he makes me feed beside the living stream.  
He brings my wandering spirit back when I forsake his ways,  
and leads me, for his mercy's sake, in paths of truth and grace.

When I walk through the shades of death, thy presence is my stay;  
one word of thy supporting breath drives all my fears away.  
Thy hand, in sight of all my foes, doth still my table spread;  
my cup with blessings overflows, thy oil anoints my head.

The sure provisions of my God attend me all my days;  
oh, may thy house be mine abode and all my work be praise.  
There would I find settled rest, while others go and come;  
no more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home.

### **Dismissal**

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



## Lessons for Pentecost 11 – August 13, 2023

**Collect:** Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live according to your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **First Reading: I Kings 19:9-18**

Elijah came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

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

### **Psalm 85:8-13**

I will listen to what the Lord God is saying,  
*for he is speaking peace to his faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to him.*

Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him,  
*that his glory may dwell in our land.*

Mercy and truth have met together;  
*righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

Truth shall spring up from the earth,  
*and righteousness shall look down from heaven.*

The Lord will indeed grant prosperity,  
*and our land will yield its increase.*

Righteousness shall go before him,  
*and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.*

### **Second Reading: Romans 10:5-15**

Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that “the person who does these things will live by them.” But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so saved. The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

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

### **Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33**

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the son of God."

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