

## Lessons for Sixth Sunday of Easter – May 14, 2023

**Collect:** O God, you prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you, in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **First Reading: Acts 17:22-31**

Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.' Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

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

## **Psalm 66:7-18**

Bless our God, you peoples;

*make the voice of his praise to be heard;*

Who holds our souls in life,

*and will not allow our feet to slip.*

For you, O God, have proved us;

*you have tried us just as silver is tried.*

You brought us into the snare;

*you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.*

You let enemies ride over our heads; we went through fire and water

*but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.*

I will enter your house with burnt-offerings and will pay you my vows,

*which I promise with my lips and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.*

I will offer you sacrifices of fat beasts with the smoke of rams;

*I will give you oxen and goats.*

Come and listen, all you who fear God,

*and I will tell you what he has done for me.*

I called out to him with my mouth,

*and his praise was on my tongue.*

If I have found evil in my heart,

*the Lord would not have heard me;*

But in truth God has heard me;

*he has attended to the voice of my prayer.*

Blessed by God, who has not rejected my prayer,

*nor withheld his love from me.*

## **Second Reading: I Peter 3:13-22**

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for

the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and make a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when "God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you - not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

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

**Gospel: John 14:15-21**

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

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

## Service of Morning Prayer Easter 6 –May 14, 2023

### Hymn 194 – Jesus lives

Jesus lives! thy terrors now can no longer, death, appall us;  
Jesus lives! by this we know thou, O grave, canst not enthrall us. Alleluia!

Jesus lives! for us he died; then, alone to Jesus living,  
pure in heart may we abide, gory our Savior giving. Alleluia!

Jesus lives! our hearts know well nought from us his love shall sever;  
life, nor death, nor powers of hell tear us from his keeping ever. Alleluia!

Jesus lives! to him the throne over all the world is given:  
may we go where he has gone, rest and reign with him in heaven. Alleluia!

### BCP - Page 39 – Easter 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 66:7-18**

### **First Reading – Acts 17:22-31**

## **Second Reading – I Peter 3:13-22**

### **Hymn 288 – Praise to God, immortal praise**

Praise to God, immortal praise, for the love that crowns our days;  
bounteous source of every joy, let thy praise our tongues employ:  
all to thee, our God, we owe, source whence all our blessings flow.

All the plenty summer pours; autumn's rich o'er-flowing stores;  
flocks that whiten all the plain; yellow sheaves of ripened grain.  
Lord, for these our souls shall raise grateful vows and solemn praise.

As thy prospering hand hath blessed, may we give thee of our best;  
and by deeds of kindly love for thy mercies grateful prove;  
singing thus through all our days praise to God, immortal praise.

### **Gospel – John 14:15-21**

### **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 6th Sunday of Easter**

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and 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 Prayer for Mission**

Everliving God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: Inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, one God, now and for ever. *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 625 – Ye holy angels bright**

Ye holy angels bright, who wait at God's right hand,  
or through the realms of light fly at your Lord's command,  
assist our song, for else the theme too high doth seem for mortal tongue.

Ye blessed souls at rest, who ran this earthly race  
and now, from sin released, behold the Savior's face,  
God's praises sound, as in his sight with sweet delight ye do abound.

Ye saints, who toil below, adore our heavenly King,  
and onward as ye go some joyful anthem sing;  
take what he gives and praise him still, though good or ill, who ever lives!

My soul, bear thou thy part, triumph in God above:  
and with a well-tuned heart sing thou the songs of love!  
Let all thy days till life shall end, whate'er he send, be filled with praise.

## **Dismissal**

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



**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins on May 14, 2023, Mother's Day, at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland.**

It's Mother's Day. So, Moms, this one is for you.

One of the things that Moms do is to inspect. Moms have expectations, including keeping a reasonably neat bedroom. We've been on the receiving end of gentle reminders and maybe direct orders.

Well, as I was reviewing our first lesson today – the passage from the Acts of the Apostles (**Acts 17:23**) - I had a sense that Paul was doing some inspecting. "For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the object of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.'"

Which, later in the passage (**Acts 17:30**), led to "While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent." In other words "Remember whom you came from and what that person expects of you. It is Jesus who is the object and subject of your worship." And he is not "unknown."

This notion of God's personal engagement with us is the subject of today's Psalm (**Psalm 66:15-17**). The author shares that he "called out to the Lord with his mouth, and the Lord's praise was on his tongue. But in truth "God has heard me" and "not rejected my prayer, nor withheld his love from me."

A very strong endorsement. Paul would be pleased, and so would Mom.

In today's Gospel (**John 14:15**), Jesus does some reminding, some inspecting himself. His words of reminder are clear: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." This is the spiritual version of "If you want dessert tonight, these shoes and toys will be off the floor and back in the closet before dinner."

Now, the Jesus inspections are different from mom's inspections. Jesus doesn't knock on the door, enter the bedroom, and take stock. He doesn't have to. He knows what is in our hearts. God has penetrating eyes and ears. Nothing gets past God.

And it is this all-knowing capacity of the Lord that is part of the Lord's appeal. We like, we appreciate, we respect the fact that God knows our going in and our coming out. God is all-knowing, and we are part of the "all."

Would we want it any other way? I don't think so. We know ourselves well enough to appreciate inspections. If Mom didn't inspect our rooms, would we clean them up on our own? Some of us would – and you know who you are. But many of us would let things slide. And you know who you are. "I'll get to it tomorrow. I'll pick up stuff tomorrow. I'll take care of things tomorrow. Please, just let me have dinner tonight, and I'll clean up my room first thing in the morning."

No. We need more discipline. Self-discipline is fine as far as it goes. But rarely does self-discipline go far enough in any setting, much less in the setting of the free-will which the Creator has granted us. It's a wonderful gift, but if we take it for granted, if we don't use our free will appropriately, we will end up with a very messy bedroom, and just perhaps a meal of broth.

Today's Psalm (**Psalm 16:17**) paints a very different picture. It's a picture of a God who hears us and attends to the voice of our prayer and does not withhold His love from us. Short version: you and I are never forsaken. We might forsake the Lord, but the Lord does not forsake us. Even when our room is really messy, the Lord will not just reprimand us and order us to take care of things before we can go out and play. The Lord will help us. For every shoe or sock we pick up, the Lord will pick up something too. Hoping, of course, to hear us say, "No Mom, I'll do it. Thank you. I'll try harder." And, "by the way, what's for breakfast?"

Today's lesson from Acts (**Acts 17:30**) uses the term repentance. "To repent" means to say "I'm sorry." Which often and appropriately includes an additional phrase: "I'll be more responsible next time."

That's who you and I are. We make promises. "I'll do better next time, Mom. You'll see. My room will be spic and span. I'll even make the bed." Yes, that's who you and I are. That is whom God is dealing with. We are who we are, and, thank God, God is who God is. Forgiving, again and again and again.

Can you imagine what our room would be like if Mom didn't point out what needs to be corrected? I suppose that eventually we would do something, if for no other reason than to find the missing second shoe. But, more likely, is that Mom wouldn't wait for us to wallow in filth. Mom would intervene. "I just cleaned your room yesterday, and look what you've done. Well, this is what I'm going to do. And you are going to help! Period. End of discussion."

And, so we help. And eventually we say "Thank you," and maybe even add "I'll try harder."

And so we do. And part of "trying harder" is to remember the sacrifice that our Lord made on our behalf and on behalf of the whole Creation. This "remembering," this "trying harder," is what we do right here. We are grateful for God's love. We are mindful of God's expectation to share that love. And, when we fall short of this expectation, when our room is a mess, we promise to try harder.

From today's Gospel (**John 14:21**): "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." Including right here, in this place.

Yes, taking care of our rooms, our lives, our space, is what we are expected to do. And guess what. We like doing it! We especially like the fact that the Risen Christ helps us do our part. Lord knows what our room would be like without his Presence. It's a "Presence" that today's Collect calls a "good thing that surpasses our understanding."

Isn't that the truth? But, guess what. We might not fully grasp God's love in Christ. We don't understand it all. But we sure do appreciate it. And that's what we do here in this chapel – we praise the Lord - and it's what we do out there – we serve the Lord.

And, on this day, we say a special thank you to all the mothers who serve us. Thank you, Lord. And thank you, Mom. *Amen.*

