

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins on Pentecost 9, July 30, 2023, at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland.

I want to share some thoughts this morning about generational transitions.

Now, transitions are a part of every walk of life. Business, political, educational, environmental, spiritual, entertainment, athletic, and, yes, family. Turning over the reins in other words. Moving on in terms of leadership and responsibility.

Sometimes we can't wait to turn over responsibility to someone else. Other times we dread the necessity to do so. "Are they up to the challenges that go with leadership?" And, as we are asking this question, the next generation is asking "When will they take the hint?"

There's a very clever add on television. I don't even know what the add is for, but I see myself in the add. There is a mom taking notes, using a sharpie and small note pad. She then removes the notes from the note pad, one by one, and then layers them on her smartphone, covering the screen with small pieces of paper. The daughter is concerned.

I identify, not with the daughter, but with the mom. I play that role every day. It drives Suzanne crazy. It confirms what the children observe, never mind the grandchildren. They've pretty much given up on the old man in terms of keeping pace with new forms of communication.

Thankfully, there are lots of senior citizens who are tech savvy. You know who you are. I just don't happen to be one of them. Give me a three-ring binder, and I'm a happy camper. And, if I never transition to using the smartphone as intended, that's okay. At least it's okay if there are other senior citizens and teenagers helping me through periods of transitions. And there are many of you in this congregation. So, I think we're Chuck-proof.

But, back to the theme of transition. Here are a couple of transition illustrations from our religious Faith.

From our Old Testament lesson today (**I Kings 3:12**): "Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you." This is God speaking to Solomon, who is succeeding David as God's spokesperson to the Israelites. David is a hero. Solomon is "only a little child," and says to God "I'm not my father. I can't do what he has done. Why are

you giving me this assignment?" God responds, "Not to worry, I, God, will give you, Solomon, a wise and discerning mind."

And it was so. To this day we associate wisdom with Solomon. The transition worked. It worked for Solomon, and centuries later, it worked for Paul. From today's lesson from Romans (**Romans 8:26**): "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."

Later in the Romans passage, it is Jesus who is the transition. "It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us." (**Romans 8:34**)

The Bible, like life itself, is full of transitions. Look at today's lesson from Matthew (**Matthew 13:31**). "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

You and I are that seed. We are the result of transitioning, and we are now the subject of transitioning. What we do counts. We make a difference. And, more to the point, how we transition makes a difference. Not merely objects of transition, but subjects of transition. Otherwise known as change-agents.

And God expects us to be agents of positive change, change for the better, if you will. As we study the great transitions of history, we ourselves make history.

Faced with this reality, we sometimes fight back. "I don't want to be a change agent. I just want to be left alone. Please, God. Ask someone else."

And, of course, God does ask others to be change-agents, but God doesn't stop asking us. And, given this enormous responsibility, we seek the company of people in like condition. It's a support group. And what do we call that support group? We call it **church**. And, here we are, at a very special point in St. Christopher's history. Transitioning in all sorts of ways, including moving from one century of service to another century of service.

Indeed, as we look back at 100 years of transitioning, we look ahead. We can't be sure what will happen in the next century, but it is certain that there will be

moments of transition, many comfortable and probably some not so comfortable. Again, like life itself.

But, it is certain that the Spirit that moved over Creation – yes, that very same Spirit - will continue to move over and through this special community and communities like it.

We are here today as the result of the transitioning efforts of parents and friends **and the Holy Spirit**. And we are here for a purpose. And we are here as a team. And this is our locker room. It is a smaller version of a cathedral. Smaller, that is, in seating capacity. But definitely not smaller in talent and good will.

And, as we share the Good News, we continue to offer today's Psalm **(Psalm 119:132)**: "Turn to me in mercy, as you always do to those who love your Name." We do love the Lord, and there will be times when we stumble and need the Lord's forgiveness, and there will be lessons learned, which we can pass on to another generation of worshippers.

It's a process that has been going on for centuries, which suggests, doesn't it, that there is Truth – Truth with a capital T – in whom we worship and how we share that Divine Love. We are baptized to share. We are baptized to make sure that the future generations are exposed to the Risen Christ. And, who knows? John Riggs Nelson, whom we baptized last Sunday, might be Senior Warden

Yes, we are custodians of a great Faith which is designed, not to be hoarded, but offered. Lord knows, the world needs Good News. And there is no Greater News than what we embrace right here, week after week. God-Creator, God-Savior, and God-Holy Spirit. That's our Story, and we're sticking to it.

And not just keeping it to ourselves, but holding it up for others to see. Transition from one generation to another is key. Paul knew what he was talking about, and, lest we forget, so do we. "For we are convinced that neither death, nor life, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." **(Romans 8:39)**

So, World, take a seat. We want you to meet someone. You won't be disappointed. His Name is Jesus, and he is God's Son and our Savior. And, as you face your transitions, He will be a great companion. After all, he has been there, he has been here, from the Beginning. *Amen.*

Service of Holy Communion Pentecost 9 – July 30, 2023

Hymn 558 – Faith of our fathers

Faith of our fathers! living still in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword:
O how our hearts beat high with joy, whene'er we hear that glorious word:
Faith of our fathers, holy faith! We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our fathers! faith and prayer shall win all nations unto thee;
and through the truth that comes from God, mankind shall then indeed be free.
Faith of our fathers, holy faith! We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our fathers! we will love both friend and foe in all our strife:
And preach thee, too, as love knows how, by kindly deeds and virtuous life.
Faith of our fathers, holy faith! We will be true to thee till death.

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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 9 Collect

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy, that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the thing eternal; 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 3:5-12

Psalm 119:129-136

Second Reading – Romans 8:26-39

Hymn 480 – When Jesus left his Father's throne

When Jesus left his Father's throne, he chose an humble birth;
like us, unhonored and unknown, he came to dwell on earth.
Like him may we be found below in wisdom's path of peace;
like him in grace and knowledge grow as years and strength increase.

Sweet were his words and kind his look, when mothers round him pressed;
their infants in his arms he took, and on his bosom blessed.
Safe from the world's alluring harms, beneath his watchful eye,
thus in the circle of his arms may we for ever lie.

When Jesus into Zion rode, the children sang around;
for joy they plucked the palms and strowed their garments on the ground.
Hosanna our glad voices raise, hosanna to our King!
Should we forget our Savior's praise, the stones themselves would sing.

Gospel – Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

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 707 – Take my life

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love;
take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King;
take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.
Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.
take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

Dismissal

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

Lessons for 9th Sunday after Pentecost – July 30, 2023

Collect: O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; 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 3:5-12

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” And Solomon said, “You have shown great a steadfast love to your servant, my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?” It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.”

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

Psalm 119:129-136

Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore I obey them with all my heart.
When your word goes forth it gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.
I open my mouth and pant;
I long for your commandments.

Turn to me in mercy,
as you always do to those who love your Name.
Steady my footsteps in your word;
let no iniquity have dominion over me.
Rescue me from those who oppress me,
and I will keep your commandments.
Let your countenance shine upon your servant
and teach me your statutes.
My eyes shed streams of tears,
because people do not keep you law.

Second Reading: Romans 8:26-39

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first born within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the Love of Christ? Will hardship or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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

Gospel: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Another parable Jesus put before the crowds: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of life, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

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