

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 2nd Sunday after Pentecost, June 2, 2024.

The life of Jesus ends on high note. Indeed, if it ended on a low note, you and I wouldn't be here. Resurrection as a final step is clearly more desirable than crucifixion. Life is better than death. Good News trumps Bad News.

When something good happens in our lives, we are quick to say "Life is good." When something bad happens in our lives, we are quick to say in the present tense "Life _____." I'll let you fill in the blank.

We go back and forth, don't we. But when all is said and done, we vote for Good News. We have a name for Good News. That name is "Gospel." And we have a name for the One who is the Good News. That name is "Jesus."

It's possible, of course, that you and I are wrong about Jesus. Maybe he was not the Son of God. Maybe the whole history surrounding his birth, life and death are not accurate. Maybe we really are "fools for Christ."

But we don't think so, do we? No, our belief in Jesus is grounded in the real life experiences of ourselves and others. From today's passage from 2 Corinthians: "afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed."

What accounts for this stubbornness on our part? Or better, **who** accounts for this stubbornness? The answer that you and I have adopted is that God is accountable. Paul reminds us that, though death is at work in us, life is at work in the Lord.

It is the conscious decision of the Creator that there is more to human life than death. You and I are not responsible for the Resurrection. **But Someone is. God is.** Even to the point of living as one of us. Our role, centuries later, is to accept and share God's decision to save us. Not our choice to save – God does that – but our choice to accept the salvation that God provides.

Today's passage from Deuteronomy describes this division of labor. "Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day you shall not do any work. It's my day to do what I want to do. Which is to save you. That's my prerogative. And I choose to exercise that prerogative in a positive manner. I could leave you

to your devices, but you've demonstrated that this is a dead-end. I have a different "end" for you. Not death, but **new** life.

Resurrection, if you will. And we will! It's what keeps us going. It's what rescues us from mistakes on our journey. It's what makes the difference between life and death.

Have you ever wondered what would happen if we reversed this sequence. Not between life and death, but between death and life. An emphasis on a good outcome to a challenging life, rather than a challenging life coming to an end without meaning.

The whole point of Jesus is to change the outcome to a positive. A gift to you and me. That's what we proclaim Sunday after Sunday. The Cross is heavy, no doubt about it. But the Empty Tomb is more powerful. Not just "powerful," but "glorious."

Today's Psalm ends with this same high note. "Those who hate the Lord would cringe before him, and their punishment would last for ever. But Israel would I feed with the finest wheat and satisfy him with honey from the rock."

"Honey from the rock." It's elusive, isn't it? Just ask our Jewish comrades. But it is possible. We need to keep that hope alive.

And one of the ways to do this – to keep hope alive – is to do what we're doing right here. Which is to remind us that God is engaged in all human struggles. On both sides of conflicts. But always with the hope and conviction that Goodness will prevail, if not by human creativity, then by God's direct intervention.

At our best, and in all sorts of ways, we can say to the man with the withered hand "Stretch out your hand." Our job right now is to say this to both sides of the conflict in the Middle East. And, as with most conflicts, both sides need to do so. And those observing need to encourage that mutual stretching.

And not just encourage others to stretch, but to do so ourselves. Including sharing the Good News of Christ. It is Jesus whom we offer to the world. Such stretching is tough, but God's love is tougher. That's our Good News, and we're sticking to it. "Honey from the rock." Ours to receive and ours to share. We like

the honey – substitute “love of God in Jesus” – and we like it so much that we share it.

That sharing is taking place constantly and all over the world. And before it is share, it is stored. Where? In colonies. You and I are a colony. We receive the Good News of Christ and then we store it and then we share it. A honey-bee colony. St. Christopher by the Sea. “Honey from the rock.”

And what does that make us, individually and collectively? It makes us “bee keepers.” We are a hive.

Now, I don’t know much about bees. But, God bless the Internet. There is a wonderful site. It is found at **beebuilt.com**. You cannot review this site without thinking of bee hives as churches and church goers as bees and church conversations as buzz. Take a look at **beebuilt.com** and see if you recognize St. Christopher by the Sea. You will, I’m sure.

The site is almost as interesting as today’s lessons. The Old Testament lesson is about what can happen in a garden. Including being tricked by a serpent, with unpleasant consequences. The New Testament lesson is about being stung by this serpent, but the pain, the affliction, is only “momentary.” And today’s Gospel reminds us that when pain does afflict us, we are not without help from one another. “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

A stretch, you say? Maybe. But not entirely. Again, we are a hive. And we support one another. We are bee keepers, because we know that the Good News we adopt is meant to be shared. Yes, sometimes with a sting. Intervention, if you will.

Well, the parallels and non-parallels could go on and on. But isn’t it interesting that there’s some connection between the natural order and our day-to-day living and a loving God who oversees it all. We don’t always understand the oversight. And sometimes we wonder if there is any oversight at all.

But here we are, creatures who have been stung and, having been stung ourselves, help others recover from their stings. It’s a pretty special hive, isn’t it To which we say “Thank you, Jesus.” May the buzz be with us. Amen.

Second Sunday after Pentecost – June 2, 2024

Hymn 436, stanzas 1-3 – Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates; behold the King of glory waits!
The King of kings is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.

O blest the land, the city blest, where Christ the ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes to whom this King of triumph comes!

Fling wide the portals of your hearts; make it a temple, set apart
from earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

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Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.

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.

Page 356 - Song of Praise - said

*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.

Collect for 2nd Sunday of Pentecost

O God, your never-failing providence sets in order all things both in heaven and earth: Put away from us, we entreat you, all hurtful things, and give us those things which are profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading – Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Psalm 81:1-10

Sing with joy to God our strength
and raise a loud shout to the God of Jacob.

Raise a song and sound the timbrel,
the merry harp, and the lyre.

Blow the ram's-horn at the new moon,
and at the full moon, the day of our feast.

For this is a statute for Israel,
a law of the God of Jacob.

He laid it as a solemn charge upon Joseph,
when he came out of the land of Egypt.

I heard an unfamiliar voice saying
"I eased his shoulder from the burden; his hands were set free from bearing the load."

You called on me in trouble, and I saved you;
I answered you from the secret place of thunder and tested you at the waters of Meribah.

Hear, O my people, and I will admonish you:
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!

There shall be no strange god among you;
you shall not worship a foreign god.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and said,
"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 4:5-12

Hymn 587 – Our Father, by whose Name

Our Father, by whose Name all fatherhood is known,
who dost in love proclaim each family thine own,
bless thou all parents, guarding well, with constant love as sentinel,
the homes in which thy people dwell.

O Christ, thyself a child within an earthly home,
with heart still undefiled, thou didst to manhood come;
our children bless, in every place, that they may all behold thy face,
and knowing thee may grow in grace.

O Spirit, who dost bind our hearts in unity,
who teachest us to find the love from self set free,
in all our hearts such love increase, that every home, by this release,
may be the dwelling place of peace.

Gospel – Mark 2:23-3:6

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 page 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 401, stanzas 1-3 – The God of Abraham Praise

The God of Abraham praise, who reigns enthroned above;
Ancient of everlasting days, and God of love;
the Lord, the great I AM, by earth and heaven confessed:
we bow and bless the sacred Name for ever blest.

He by himself hath sworn: we on his oath depend;
we shall, on eagle wings upborne, to heaven ascend:
we shall behold his face, we shall his power adore,
and sing the wonders of his grace for ever more.

There dwells the Lord, our King, the Lord, our Righteousness,
triumphant o'er the world and sin, the Prince of Peace;
on Zion's sacred height his kingdom he maintains,
and, glorious with his saints in light, fore ever reigns.

Dismissal

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

Lessons for Pentecost 2 – June 2, 2024

Collect: O God, whose never-failing providence sets in order all things both in heaven and earth: Put away from us, we entreat you, all hurtful things, and give us those things which are profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work – you, or your son, or your daughter, or your male or female slave, of your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

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

Psalm 81

Sing with joy to God our strength
and raise a loud shout to the God of Jacob.
Raise a song and sound the timbrel,
the merry harp, and the lyre.
Blow the ram's-horn at the new moon,
and at the full moon, the day of our feast.
For this is a statute for Israel,
a law of the God of Jacob.
He laid it as a solemn charge upon Joseph,
when he came out of the land of Egypt.
I heard an unfamiliar voice saying
*"I eased his shoulder from the burden;
his hands were set free from bearing the load."*
You called on me in trouble, and I saved you;
*I answered you from the secret place of thunder and tested you at the
waters of Meribah.*

Hear, O my people, and I will admonish you:
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!
There shall be no strange god among you;
you shall not worship a foreign god.
I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and said,
“Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.”
And yet my people did not hear my voice,
and Israel would not obey me.
So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their hearts;
to follow their own devices.
Oh, that my people would listen to me!
that Israel would walk in my ways!
I should soon subdue their enemies;
and turn my hand against their foes.
Those who hate the Lord would cringe before him,
and their punishment would last for ever.
But Israel would I feed with the finest wheat
and satisfy him with honey from the rock.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:5-12

We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

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

Gospel: Mark 2:23-3:6

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pick heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priest to eat, and he gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

[The Gospel of the Lord. *Praise be to you, O Christ.*