

March 2 2025 - Last Sunday after the Epiphany

Today's lessons are both troubling and heartening. Troubling in that there are circumstances beyond our control. From the Gospel: "Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him."

Obviously, a dreadful experience for the one being mauled. Dreadful also for those witnesses, who, by themselves, are unable to stop the mauling. It sure seems like a lose-lose situation. We want to help, but our help, whatever it might be, doesn't appear to be strong enough to address the suffering.

So, as parents, what do we do? Well, we seek help, don't we. We go outside ourselves. Maybe it's the emergency room at the local hospital. Maybe it's a phone call to someone who has experienced the same sense of helplessness. Maybe it's a visit to an altar rail with a plea to God for healing.

Bad things happen, don't they. And often, we see no value at all in the suffering. Nor do we see value in our prayers. "Where are you, Jesus, when we need you? I've been faithful to you. Can't you be faithful to me?"

What comes next? Well, maybe no answer at all. Seemingly, silence on the other end of our prayers. We have prayed to God, and it appears that the prayers will go unanswered. Or, if answered, perhaps not in the manner that we had hoped.

Now, that's the key, isn't it. "Not answered in the manner that we had hoped." That is not the outcome we want to hear, is it. No, we want God to reinforce what we want or what we feel we deserve.

And, as we probably have experienced, we hear God responding: "Excuse me. You, little human, are telling me what to do? Well, it doesn't work that way. I'll evaluate your situation and respond appropriately. And my response may be exactly what you want to hear or exactly what you don't want to hear. You ask. I answer. And then you say "Thank you, Lord" and get to work, whatever that work might be.

Today's passage from 2 Corinthians speaks of this "getting to work" as an act of "great boldness." Putting faith into practice isn't easy. We have to work at

“getting to work.” In this sense, the Church is like a gymnasium. We can work out at home, but working out with others might be a more satisfying experience. And here we are. Listening to what God is saying in Scripture, and contemplating what the message means for us, individually and collectively.

This notion of the Church, being like a gymnasium, is intriguing. What do we do when we go the gym? Well, we select the equipment we want to engage. And the purpose of engagement is to get to where we want to be. We stretch ourselves physically, yes, but perhaps intellectually and spiritually as well. On most visits, we have a routine. But, every now and then, we try a new machine, and perhaps add this “station” to the next visit, and beyond.

And we meet new people, trying stay in shape or get in shape. And what we realize is that our challenges are not unique. How do we forgive others and how do we accept the forgiveness of others? How do we stretch our faith? Are we seeking the Lord, or just expecting the Lord to seek us?

Well, the gym analogy has its limits, doesn't it. And so we seek other ways of understanding and appreciating our relationship with the Lord, and with one another. We read, we pray, we challenge, we forgive, we accept forgiveness, we give thanks, we experience different lanes, we stick to those lanes, but we're always looking for others lanes to explore.

And we do all of this to get a little closer to God. And at this point what does God tell us? Share the Faith, share the experience, share the challenges. And the more you do this, the better you will feel and the better you will be able to handle the challenges that come your way and the better you will be to help others handle their challenges.

Do we absolutely need the gym experience to grow self-confidence? Well, if not the gym, if not the church, what are the other possibilities? And, of course, there are other possibilities. Some that we have experienced and others that we have not experienced. Life is full of options, including and especially what we do right here.

But the best options are those which stretch us, not just physically, but mentally and spiritually. And where is one of those stretching options? Right here and wherever the Gospel is proclaimed and offered and experienced.

When we leave the gym, having stretched ourselves, we often say “Wow, that was a tough work out.” Our version here of “wow that was a tough workout” is a simple “Thank you, Lord. What comes next?”

Well, in this setting, in the church calendar, the “next” is the Season of Lent. And if we thought the Season of Epiphany was a challenge, Lent will be a greater one. But that’s okay. We like a challenge. We love the experience. We feel better having stretched. And we are reminded that the death of Jesus was followed quickly by the Resurrection.

And here we are. Quite an adventure. And it’s not over yet. Nor will it be! Plenty more to study, to wrestle with, to pass on. All with the hope and promise of an everlasting life with the Creator. Continuing right now, right here, with the promise that all will be well. Thank you, Lord.

Amen.

Holy Communion – Last Sunday of Epiphany – March 2, 2025

Hymn 336 – Come with us, O blessed Jesus

Come with us, O blessed Jesus, with us evermore to be;
and though leaving now thine altar, let us nevermore leave thee.
Be thou one with us for ever, in our life thy love divine
our own flesh and blood has taken, and to us though, givest thine.

Come with us, O mighty Savior, God from God, and Light to Light;
thou art God, thy glory veiling, so that we may bear the sight.
Now we go to seek and serve thee, through our work and as through our prayer;
grant us light to see and know thee, in thy people everywhere.

Come with us, O King of glory, by angelic voices praised;
in our hearts as in thy heaven, be enraptured anthems raised.
Let the mighty chorus ever sing its glad exultant songs;
let its hymn be heard forever peace for which creation longs.

BCP - Page 355 – Greeting

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

BCP – Pages 356 – Song of Praise

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.

Collect for Last Epiphany

O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Exodus 34:29-35

Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain, with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining. And they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

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

Psalm 99

The Lord is King; let the people tremble;

he is enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth shake.

The Lord is great in Zion;

he is high above all peoples.

Let them confess his Name, which is great and awesome.

He is the Holy One.

“O mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity;

you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.”

Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and fall down before his footstool;

he is the Holy One.

Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among those who call upon his Name,

they called upon the Lord, and he answered them.

He spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud;

they kept his testimonies and the decree that he gave them.

“O Lord our God, you answered them indeed;
you were a God who forgave them, yet punished them for their evil deeds.”
Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and worship him upon his holy hill;
for the Lord our God is the Holy One.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Since then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God’s work; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

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

Hymn 321 – My God, thy table now is spread.

My God, thy table now is spread, thy cup with love doth overflow;
be all thy children thither led, and let them thy sweet mercies know.

O let thy table honored be, and furnished well with joyful guests;
and may each soul salvation see, that here its sacred pledges tastes.

Drawn by thy quickening grace, O Lord, in countless numbers let them come
and gather from their Father’s board the Bread that lives beyond the tomb.

Nor let thy spreading gospel rest till through the world thy truth has run,
Till with this Bread shall all be blessed who see the light or feel the sun.

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke 9:28-43a

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" –not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said "This is my Son, my chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen. On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

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

Sermon

The Rev. Charles Rowins

BCP – page 358 - The Nicene Creed - standing

We believe in one God, the Father 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 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 worshipped 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.

Prayers of the People – page 388 – Form IV

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.

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; and 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

The peace of the Lord be always with you. *And also with you.*

Announcements and Preparation of Table

BCP – page 361 – Eucharistic Prayer

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 your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Kneeling or sitting

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.

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.

BCP – page 364 - 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.

The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven.
The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation.

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Let us pray – page 365

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son 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.*

Dismissal Prayer – page 834

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honor and praise of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Hymn 498 – Beneath the cross of Jesus

Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand,
the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land.
a home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noontide heat and the burden of the day.

Upon the cross of Jesus mine eyes at times can see
the very dying form of one who suffered there for me;
and from my smitten heart with tears two wonders I confess:
the wonders of all redeeming love and my unworthiness.

I take, O Cross, thy shadow for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of his face;
content to let my pride go by, to know no gain nor loss.
my sinful self my only shame, my glory all the cross.

Dismissal

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