

6 Epiphany sermon Feb 16 2025

Today's lessons are timely, aren't they. They speak to the challenge of sustaining faith in times of pain and sorrow. There are two possible responses. Question the faith, or give thanks for the faith. You and I do a lot of both, don't we. But we come down on the side of thanksgiving.

According to Jeremiah, if we don't trust the Lord, we will be "like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes."

Well, guess what. You and I and countless others believe that relief has come. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died."

This is the spirit of today's Psalm. "They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; everything they do shall prosper."

So, which is it? No relief for the shrub? Or, in Christ there is plentiful redemption? Is it "one or the other"? Or is it "both and"?

My guess is that it is "both and" for most of us, if not all of us. We know first hand what it is like to suffer. Sometimes we cause the suffering. But we also know first hand what it is like to prosper, to live, to contribute, to make the world a little better, and to want to share this faith with others who might be struggling.

One of the reasons that people were and are attracted to Jesus is that Jesus helped people to acknowledge a need for help, and then reminded people that help was at hand. God the Father had not forgotten them. No indeed, God the Father had sent His Only Begotten Son to fulfill a promise, to lift spirits, not depress them.

This message of hope is the subject of today's Gospel. We know this message as The Beatitudes. The Blessings. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." But it is not a kingdom to hoard. It is a kingdom to share.

This all makes sense to you and me. It clicks. It is why we gather. Not only to give thanks for our blessings, but to remember that we are to share those blessings, particularly when “blessings” are in doubt. We have an obligation to be healers as well as those being healed.

Now, had Jesus not been raised from the dead, his teachings would have died with him. He would be a mere speck in the history books, if a speck at all. But he’s not a speck. No, He is God Incarnate. He is God in human form. And, as God, He is worth listening to. And not just listening to, but showing you and me and those whom we encounter that death is subject to life. Not even close.

Yes, we are a special kind of shrub. We survive even in tough times. At least we have the capacity to survive. And not just survive ourselves, but to help others survive with hope and confidence. Sometimes we do feel like a shrub without water. And it’s not a good feeling. And therefore we end up not helping others.

So, where do we go for water? How do we recover? We want to be strong. And we want others to be strong. So, where might we find water?

Well, we’re very fortunate. The Water found us. The Creator took pity on us. The Creator addressed our deep thirst. And how did the Creator do that? The Creator became one of us. Subject to all that we are subject to, but more. The “more” is described in Luke’s Gospel. “Yours is the kingdom of God you will be filledyou will laugh you will rejoice and leap for joy.”

But, these positive, wonderful acts of God don’t mean much if we either deny them or shortchange them or ignore them. We have a critical role to play in this situation. And that role is not just to receive God’s Love, but to be carriers of that Love.

This combination of receiving and sharing is God’s Gift to you and me, and through us to others. Yes, we can make a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. It’s Win-Win for us and potentially for those with whom we share the Good News. From today’s Psalm: “They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither.”

Our final hymn today is “Come down, O Love divine.” It’s a beautiful hymn, with lots of thoughtful phrases. Here is the conclusion to the third stanza. “And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long, shall far outpass the power of human telling; for none can guess its grace, till Love create a place wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.”

Guess where that place is wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling. We are that place. You and I, individually and collectively. And we are there for two huge reasons. To accept the restored life we see in Jesus, and for us then to share that Light. It’s a pretty straightforward method, isn’t it. Receive and share.

But, of course, if we don’t receive that Light and share it, restoration might not be possible. And what a dreadful loss that would be for us and for others. But not to worry. God is running this Show. The only question is whether we will be onboard. And if St. Christopher by the Sea is any indication, the answer is yes. On board we are, and ready to write a thankful review, even, maybe especially, in times of pain and suffering.

Amen.

Holy Communion – Sixth Sunday of Epiphany– February 16, 2024

Hymn 690 – Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me now and ever more,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through;
strong deliverer, strong deliverer, be thou till my strength and shield,
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside:
death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side;
song of praises, song of praises, I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

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 Epiphany 6

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness, we can do nothing without you, give us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-10 – see leaflet

Thus says the Lord: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse – who can understand it? I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.

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

Psalm 1 see leaflet

Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!
Their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and they meditate on his law day and night.
They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season,
with leaves that do not wither;
everything they do shall prosper.
It is not so with the wicked;
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes,
nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.
For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked is doomed.

Second Reading: I Corinthians 15:12-20 see leaflet

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ – whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If, for this life only, we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But, in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

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

Hymn 711

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you; Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia!

Ask, and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find,
knock, and the door shall be opened unto you; Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia!

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke 6:17-26

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Jesus came down with the twelve apostles and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them. Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets."

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.

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 516 – Come down, O Love divine

Come down, O Love divine, seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardor glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn, till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace, till Love create a place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.

Dismissal

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