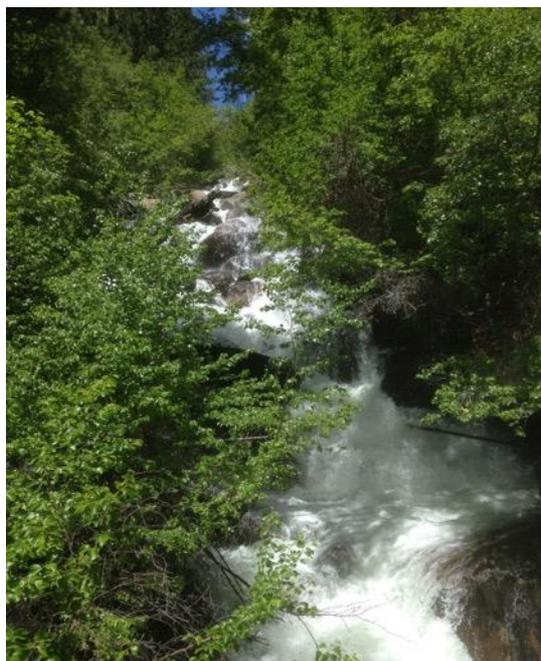


Sunday Missive – June 21, 2020



The Third Sunday After Pentecost

Greetings, One and All, This Sunday we begin a new enterprise here at St. Peter's by the Sea. This Sunday Missive will be delivered live on facebook at 11:00 A.M. on Sunday, June 21. Click on the link below, or cut and paste into your browser bar and you should be able to watch our service. If you keep this Missive open too, you will have the hymn lyrics ready to sing. We are experimenting with this process, so please be patient. If you are unable to watch, please let Padre Sid know afterwards and we will try to get you up and running for next time: sssymington@gmail.com or (203) 209-2339. The service will last about 35 minutes, with Marti Lindholm reading and playing music and Nancy Castle reading and directing. If you have a facebook account, or would like to make one for the purpose of watching, be sure to go to "St. Peter's By The Sea, Morro Bay" using that exact spelling. There are a few other pages that are either inactive – and we can't take them down -- or another group entirely!

https://www.facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay/?ref=aymt_home_page_panel&id=ARAUeH_DsZ84100oD17S5TKTJa9nPInamVaKKBDjC7zKd1Kvws0elUTfHmPTVaREXk2ty7B1jsL3bjxW

Grace to you and peace, from God our Creator, from Christ our Redeemer, who with the Holy Spirit sanctifies and nourishes us.

Let us pray: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts with the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may more perfectly love, and more worthily magnify your holy Name. Amen.

As our society continues to struggle with inherent contradictions and the fundamental inconsistencies that keep us broken, dysfunctional and in conflict with our very selves, we must acknowledge, to paraphrase a great writer, that “if a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome our shortcomings, we would have addressed these issues long ago. But we have found that such codes and philosophies have not saved us from continued failures. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn’t there. Our human resources, as marshalled by the will, have not been sufficient; they failed us utterly.” So we must think of our present dilemma as an internal battle, to be won only by giving away earthly power:

Hymn 555

Lead on, O King eternal, the day of march has come;
Henceforth in fields of conquest thy tents shall be our home:
Through days of preparation thy grace has made us strong,
And now, O King eternal, we lift our battle song.

Lead on, O King eternal, till sin's fierce war shall cease,
And holiness shall whisper the sweet amen of peace;
For not with swords loud clashing, nor roll of stirring drums,
But deeds of love and mercy, the heavenly kingdom comes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3V-6q-nETtQ>

A Reading from the Prophecy of Jeremiah – Chapter 20

O Lord, you have enticed me, and overpowered me with your Word. But because of you, I have become a laughingstock and everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I cry out, "Violence and destruction to those who do evil!" If I try to say, "I will not mention God, or speak any more in God's name," there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. For I hear many whisper about me: "Terror is all around! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" Even my close friends watch for me to stumble. "Perhaps he can be enticed, then we can prevail against him, and take our revenge," they say. But the Lord is with me like a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. O Lord of hosts, you test the righteous, you see the heart and the mind; let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have committed my cause. Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord, who will delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.



Psalm 69

Save me, O God, for the waters have risen to my **neck*** I have sunk into the mud of the deep, where there is no **foothold**.

I have entered the waters of the **deep*** And there the flood **overwhelms me**.

I am wearied with crying aloud; my throat is **parched*** My eyes are wasted away with waiting for my **God**.

More numerous than the hairs on my **head*** Are those who hate me without **cause**.

Many are those who **attack me*** Bitter enemies attack me with **lies**.

What I have never **stolen*** How O Lord can I possibly **restore**?

In your great mercy, answer me, **O God*** With your salvation that never **fails**.

Rescue me from sinking in the **mud*** From those who hate me, **deliver me**.

O Save me from the waters of the **deep*** Lest the fathomless waves **overwhelm me**.

Answer me quickly, for I am in **distress*** Come close to my soul and **redeem me**.

A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew, Chapter 10

Jesus said, "If they have made Beelzebul the master of the house how can others help but malign the entire household! But have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear

whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set children against their parents, and siblings against one another. Whoever loves anyone or anything more than they love the truth, and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy. Those who seek only to find their own life will lose it, but those who lose their own life for love's sake will find it.

In the old, old days, before Christianity and even before there were such things as Israelites, people used to think of the World as little spots of land surrounded by water. Not only surrounded like an island, but surrounded completely, as if we were suspended in a huge, endless vastness of water, beyond measure. Most of us have swum under water at least a little bit, and we know it can be fun and interesting -- to a point. But when you start running out of air, it's just plain Bad City. If you've ever had trouble breathing – under water, under too many brothers and sisters or pillows or because you're sick – you know it's not a nice feeling. It is painful and very scary. And the feeling of breathing again is just Happytown. "I can't breathe" verbalizes terror and despair.

So it makes sense that one idea people had about water from the beginning of time was that the water is a big monster, a big powerful god that will destroy us if we don't have help. The universal terror of suffocation explains why so many sacred stories are about defeating the chaotic power of water, wherein God proves that God is God by overcoming and saving us from the chaos of not breathing.

This analogy of overwhelming water resonates with everyone. When the events of life start to seem unfathomable, frighteningly painful and far from manageable, it can feel like we will never emerge into peace and happiness again. People neglect and betray and leave us; we – or those we love – get sick and falter and die; random acts of kindness give way to random acts of violence; natural disasters occur alarmingly or devastatingly close to home. Events exceed our power to control or even effect them. We feel as if we are being drowned by life. At this point, there often is nothing we can do, there is only something

we can be. Can we imagine living entire lives lived with such anxiety and unpredictability; not because of mental illness – terrible though it can be – but only because of the color of one’s skin? Here, from Fats Waller and company:

Cold empty bed, springs hard as lead
Feel like old Ned, wished I was dead
What did I do to be so black and blue?
Even the mouse ran from my house
They laugh at you, and scorn you too
What did I do to be so black and blue?
I'm white inside, but that don't help my case
'Cause I can't hide what is in my face
How will it end? Ain't got a friend
My only sin is in my skin
What did I do to be so black and blue?

The irony we have failed to apprehend is that as we have gotten better at lengthening our lifespans, our success has demanded more spiritual development to make it sustainable, not less. We haven’t conquered death, and we never will. With every scientific development, this becomes more difficult to bear in mind, let alone accept. The current global pandemic is only proving how sorely we are lacking. We are all trying to hold our breath until there’s a vaccine for this virus. But the world can’t hold its breath for a year. So those who are well-off find means of comfort for the meantime, and those who were already at economic risk suffer ruin – and death – in proportionately far greater numbers.

At every crossroads, where the frustrations and sorrows of yesterday are transformed into the procedures and medical miracles of today, who we are, the content of our character becomes more important. Medicine will never solve our spiritual problems. Our human resources, as marshalled by the will, are not sufficient; they will ultimately fail us. There’s lots we can do, but as we do more and more about how we manage to continue to live, we must be more attentive to who and what we are. Instead we seem to be less and less concerned with our standards of character. Those with wealth and

power stray farther from lives of spiritual accountability, selfless charity and gratitude, while taking advantage of all the miracles money can buy. Meanwhile, the growing percentage of people without wealth and power live farther and farther from all sources of benefit.

Who would stand by and let this happen? Who would watch the waters rise over others' heads and do nothing but reap the rewards of selling miracles at a high price? Who would try to make a case for withholding life and longevity based on wealth or privilege? Nobody, that's who. But because our spiritual lives have not even begun to keep pace with our technological lives, we are increasingly a society ruled by nobodies.

The psalmist cries out what many of us are feeling: "Save me before I die." But that is the one thing God won't do. God knows that only a dramatically heightened awareness of our human entanglement in sin, awareness of our astonishing and seemingly relentless propensity for dealing with things ourselves, will work on our proud personalities. We have to feel like we're drowning or dying of thirst before we'll ask for help, before we'll surrender to the process of being saved. "Go ahead, do some more research," says God, "see how long you can stay under." We can reverse the process anytime; we can concede that God is God and we can let God do God's job of creating more love. When we do, straightway the drowning waters will recede, the Living Water will flow and we will start being somebodies.

Let us pray:

O God, our Ultimate Source of Healing and Strength, we need Your support now more than ever before. We are living in toxic times. In our nation, extremism once lingered at the margins of society. Now it has commanded an acceptable place in the very center.

We must confess that we deceive ourselves by believing that any of us is entirely free of such racism and prejudice, that we don't harbor these ugly sentiments, especially of those whose skin color differs from our own. Yet our souls are stained.

Help us to confront our deception, O God. Though we may not have

consciously mistreated our sisters and brothers, all too often, we have silently stood by and ignored their plight. We have not raised our voices in protest as security guards trail them in stores like criminals, as we stare suspiciously at them as they walk or ride their bicycles in our neighborhoods, as police officers falsely accuse them of traffic violations, and worse; as bank officials refuse them loans, and as landlords rent and evict from them unsafe houses ridden with disease.

Fill us this day with zeal to eradicate our nation's original sin of systemic racism and to heal our nation by upholding the dignity and humanity of each of its citizens. Amen.

May all beings be granted with the strength, determination and wisdom to extinguish anger and reject violence as a way of life. May all suffering cease and may we seek, find, and fully realize the love and compassion that already lives within us and allow them to inspire and permeate our every action. May we exercise the precious gift of choice and the power to change as that which makes us uniquely human and is the only true path to life and liberation. May we swiftly reach complete, effortless freedom so that our fearless, unhindered action be of benefit to all. Amen

LEVAS Hymn 184

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of the Spirit, washed in the blood

This is my story, this is my song, praising the Saviour all the day long

Perfect submission, perfect delight, visions of rapture burst on my sight;
Angels, descending, bring from above, echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fiSkmbzS4nw>

Now, let us depart, even as we remain connected, walking only in the eternal ways of love. Thanks be to God.