

The Sunday Missive – January 17, 2020



hints of spring in our memorial garden

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Nancy Castle, Mary Sue Gee, Jeff Wheelwright and I bring you this service of prayer, scripture and song with love. If you go to our facebook page, you can watch and participate from home: [facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay](https://www.facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay) Scroll down until you see today's Sunday Missive, anytime after 11 A.M. on Sunday, January 17. No facebook account is needed! The links that follow each hymn will take you to youtube videos of a wide range of people around the world singing those hymns – enjoy them! Please direct any questions or comments to your rector, The Rev. Sidney Symington via: (203) 209-2339 or: sssymington@gmail.com. **Let us pray:**

Almighty God, by the hand of Moses your servant you led your people out of slavery, and made them free at last: Grant that your church, following the example of your prophet Martin Luther King, may resist oppression in the name of your love, and may strive to secure in this life the equal liberty and justice for all people that you promise in the world to come, through Jesus, who is Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

O Lord our Governor, the whole world is filled with your glory: We commend this nation to your merciful care, that we may follow your guidance and live in your peace. Give to all in authority, wisdom and strength to know and to do your will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness; and make them always remember that they are called to serve humanity in the fear of your righteous judgment. **Amen.**

Hymn 11 – Awake My Soul! Vss. 1, 2 & 3

Awake, my soul, and with the sun thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise To
pay thy morning sacrifice.

Lord, I my vows to thee renew; disperse my sins as morning dew.
Guard my first springs of thought and will,
And with thyself my spirit fill.

Direct, control, suggest, this day, all I design, or do, or say;
That all my powers, with all their might,
In thy sole glory may unite.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lr39cEYSvVo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l53oomoh9-c>

A Reading from the Book of Samuel – Chapter Three

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was resting in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli. But Eli said, "I did not call; go lie down again." So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; go lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and

the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him, so when the Lord called Samuel a third time, he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. Eli said to Samuel, "Go and rest; if he calls you again, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Then the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew: his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever." Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son, what was it that he told you? May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him, and Eli said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."

As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord. This is the Word of the Lord.

Psalm 139

O Lord, you search me and you know me* You know my resting and my rising; you discern my purpose from afar.

You mark when I walk or when I lie down* All my ways lie open to you.

Before ever a word is on my tongue you know it, O Lord, through and through* Behind and before you besiege me, your hand ever laid upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me* Too high, beyond my reach.

O where can I go from your spirit* Or where can I flee from your face?

If I climb the heavens, you are there* If I lie in my grave, you are there.

If I take the wings of the dawn and dwell at the sea's furthest end*
Even there your hand would lead me, your right hand would hold me
fast.

If I say: "Let the darkness hide me and the light around me be night,"*
Darkness is not dark for you and night is as clear as the day.

For it was you who created my being* Knit me together in my mother's
womb.

And I thank you for the wonder of my being* For the wonders of all
your creation.

O search me, God, and know my heart* O test me and know my
thoughts.

See that I follow not the wrong path* But lead me in the path of life
eternal.

A Reading from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians – Ch. 4

Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. We know it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I am not able even to judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.

For what do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift? Already you have all you

want! For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to mortals. We are fools for the sake of Christ. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we speak kindly. I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. This is the Word of the Lord.

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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HPKL1wOVXk>

The Holy Gospel According to John – Chapter 1

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an

Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." This is the Gospel of the Lord.

The Rule of Three is a pattern used in storytelling, wherein some aspect of the story occurs three times, with minor variations. The first two instances build tension, and the third releases it by incorporating a twist; or the heroine is given three tests and triumphs on the third.

This rhythm of threes recurs throughout human doings: "On your marks, get set, go", "Readin', Writin' and 'Rithmetic," Bingo, bango, bongo."

We tell jokes based on three familiar characters in the same situation: A Rabbi, a Priest, and an Imam walk into a bar. The first two react stereotypically, the third does something outrageous; a Blonde, a Brunette and a Redhead. Or we repeat the same idea three times, but with a twist on the third one: The *Dick Van Dyke Show* par example, saw Morey Amsterdam say to a bald guy, "Can I get you anything? Cup of coffee? Doughnut? Toupee?"

The rule of three is a deep psycho-cultural phenomenon, our primal mid-brain longing for the order, resolution and comfort the Trinity provides. We can truly rest when the peace of this symmetry has been achieved. We want to know that God pervades all life, and the trebled presence of divine Creator, human Redeemer, and mystical Sanctifier satisfies this desire.

We become whole because we think we know and we feel we are known. The psalmist cries: "If I climb the heavens, you are there; if I lie in my grave, you are there. If I take the wings of the dawn and dwell at the sea's furthest end, even there your hand would lead me, your right hand hold me fast."

It's no coincidence that Indiana Jones has to pass three tests to get to the Holy Grail. The Path of God, (Father?) The Word of God (Son?) and The Breath of God (Holy Spirit?) George Lucas and company plucked an ancient soulstring, and audiences everywhere adored it.

One of today's stories is about Samuel, whose very name means "The Name of God." He will go on to be the last of the Prophets and the first of the Judges in the Hebrew Bible. It is Samuel who will anoint the first kings of the Israelites, including David.

So, young Samuel is sleeping under a counter in back of the temple, when he's awakened by a voice: "Samuel!" He runs out to his boss Eli, and says, "Here I am, Sir, all present and correct!" But Eli says, "I didn't call you; go back to bed." So he goes and lies down again. Bingo. The voice comes again, "Samuel! Samuel!" Again, Samuel gets up and goes to Eli, "Here I am; you called me." "I did not call, my son; go lie down." Bango. The voice comes again, a third time: "Samuel! Get up!" That's the turning point, when matters come to a head and Samuel is transformed into his full self. Eli realizes that it is God who is calling the boy and tells him so. After that, Samuel grows up, the Lord is with him and lets none of his words fall to the ground. From then on, all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knows that Samuel is a trustworthy prophet of the Lord. Bongo.

The Bible tells the story of humanity's three opportunities to comport itself according to the cosmic rules of goodness. To have humankind cease trying to make the world conform to the will of the powerful among us, and instead start adopting standards of goodness, forbearance and benevolence known as the Will of God is the purpose of Holy Scripture and all religion. Only then will none of God's words fall to the ground.

Humankind, up until the time of the Flood, fail to do this. So God washes the Earth clean and starts again. We must note that God starts again with Noah and his family, who, by most any measure are less than exemplary citizens, but that is a story for another day.

The second opportunity comes when Moses leads the people out of Egypt to begin life again as 'one nation, under God.' As Paul puts it, "Our ancestors all passed through the sea, and were baptized into

Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.” Strike two.

Following the Rule of Three, our salvation history culminates in the climax of God’s interaction with humankind, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Philip says to Nathanael, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, it’s ole Jesus from Nazareth.” Nathanael is skeptical: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth, this sounds like another false alarm, pie in the sky fanatic, another chance for us to fail.” But Philip persists: “Come and see.” When he sees Nathanael coming toward him, Jesus says, “I searched you and I know you, I know your resting and your rising; I discern your purpose from afar,” or words to that effect. And Nathanael replies, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! And Jesus says to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you are going to see heaven opened wide and all the angels of God.”

When Paul refers to us as the “people upon whom the ages of ages has come, he is pointing out that humanity’s third, and he would say final opportunity has arrived, to get it right. Jesus is called the Ancient of Days, because the opportunity he embodies for us has always been present in our strivings and struggles, our defiance and devotion, our failures to follow God and our new beginnings. Jesus is our savior because he completes the story of humankind. Jesus is God’s purpose and personality. Jesus is God’s punchline.

Hymn 812 -- Here I Am, Lord – Mary Sue Gee, Soloist
Craig Courtney, arr.

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard My people cry,
All who dwell in darkest sin. My hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them? Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord, Is it I, Lord? I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if You lead me. I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne My people's pain.
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them, Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them. Whom shall I send?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFpKgtJ4wcc&list=PLD3B0B9CB8F88702A&index=4>

Prayers

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move in every human heart, and among the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that being healed of our divisions we may live in justice, peace and charity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Almighty God, you proclaim your truth in every age by many voices: Direct, in our time, we pray, those who speak where many listen and write what many read; that they may do their part in making the heart of this people wise, its mind sound, and its will righteous; to the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

We pray for our world, in the midst of a terrifying pandemic, for those who are ill and their loved ones, especially Sharon and Jane, Anna, Caroline and Tony; are there others?. We pray for those who care for the sick, and those who work in science and medicine, especially Betsey, Lynn, John; are there others? Bless their hands and hearts and let them know we are grateful. We pray for the people of St. Peter's by the Sea, the San Luis Obispo Deanery, and the Diocese of El Camino Real. May we know that our lives are always in your loving care. **Amen.**

Hymn 371 – Thou Whose Almighty Word

Thou, whose almighty word chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight; hear us, we humbly pray,
And, where the Gospel day sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light!

Thou who didst come to bring on thy redeeming wing
Healing and sight, health to the sick in mind,
Sight to the in-ly blind, now to all humankind,
Let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love, life-giving holy Dove,
Speed forth thy flight! Move on the waters' face
Bearing the gifts of grace, and, in earth's darkest place,
Let there be light!

Holy and blessed Three, glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, love, might; boundless as ocean's tide,
Rolling in fullest pride, through the world far and wide,
Let there be light!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lKJsHpRhjU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFbh3xPk6AA>

And now, may the Lord go before you with heavenly light, always and everywhere, that you may perceive with clear sight, act with pure intention and revere one another with true affection. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier remain with you and your loved ones this day and forevermore.