

The Sunday Missive – January 24, 2020



The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Nancy Castle, Jan Swanson, Thelma Huchthausen, Diane and Roger Ludin 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 24. 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 and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Hymn 523 -- Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken Vss. 1, 2 & 3

Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God;
He whose word cannot be broken formed thee for his own abode;
On the Rock of Ages founded, what can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded, thou may'st smile at all thy foes.

See! the streams of living waters, springing from eternal love,
Well supply thy sons and daughters and all fear of want remove.
Who can faint, when such a river ever flows their thirst to assuage?
Grace which, like the Lord, the giver, never fails from age to age.

Round each habitation hov'ring, see the cloud and fire appear
For a glory and a cov'ring, showing that the Lord is near.
Thus deriving from their banner, light by night, and shade by day;
Safe they feed upon the manna which he gives them when they pray.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRYJXSISoWg&t=41s>

A Reading from the Book of Jonah - Chapter 3

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish." When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. This is the Word of the Lord.

Psalm 62

For God alone my soul in silence waits* From the Lord comes my salvation.

God alone is my rock and my salvation* My fortress; I shall never be shaken.

Trust the Lord at all times, O people; pour out your hearts* God is a refuge for us.
Selah

Those of low estate are but a breath* Those of high estate are a delusion.

In the balances they go up* Even together they are lighter than a breath.

Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery* If riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

Once God has spoken; twice have I heard* All power belongs to God,

And steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord* For you repay to all according to their work.

For God alone my soul in silence waits* From the Lord comes my salvation.

God alone is my rock and my salvation* My fortress; I shall never be shaken.

On God rests my deliverance and my honor* My mighty rock, my refuge is the Lord.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg2f_AzzirQ

A Reading from Paul's 1st Letter to the Corinthians – Chapter 7

I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

Hymn 758 – You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore Vss. 1&2

You have come down to the lakeshore seeking neither the wise nor the wealthy,
But only asking for me to follow.

Sweet Lord, you have looked into my eyes,
Kindly smiling, you've called out my name.
On the sand I've abandoned my small boat; Now with you, I will seek other seas.

You know full well what I have, Lord; neither treasure nor weapons for conquest,
Just these my fishnets and will for working.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPnLSefyr5s>

Tú has venido a la orilla, no has buscado ni a sabios ni a ricos;
Tan sólo quieres que yo te siga.
Señor, me has mirado a los ojos, sonriendo has dicho mi nombre,
En la arena he dejado mi barca, junto a ti buscaré otro mar.

Tú sabes bien lo que tengo; en mi barca no hay oro ni espadas,
Tan sólo redes y mi trabajo.

Tú necesitas mis manos, mi cansancio que a otros descanse,
Amor que quiera seguir amando.

Tú, pescador de otros lagos, ansia eterna de almas que esperan,
Amigo bueno, que así me llamas.

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

A Reading from the Gospel According to Mark – Chapter 1

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

The ultimate measure of godly people is not what they do in moments of comfort and convenience, but how they behave in times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbor will risk position, prestige and even life to do the right thing for the welfare of others

Jesus starts his ministry when his cousin gets arrested. A couple of weeks ago, we listened to the beginning of Mark's gospel... "John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Jesus picks up the refrain that John had been preaching: "Repent and Believe!" It was a dangerous thing to say. Jesus was very much at risk of being the next one to be arrested. Not only that, he raises the stakes by recruiting people: Simon, Andrew, James and John and the rest, saying "Follow me;" and they do. This movement is a direct threat to the powers who arrested John, but the disciples decide that following Jesus is the right thing to do, and accept the result to be what it will be.

Our Church Year begins with the expectation and pause for reflection of Advent, moves through the cherished glory of the nativity of Jesus, and into these wide open, "ordinary" times, when we consider the particulars and implications of Jesus' career on Earth, not so much the sweet and glorious transformational stanzas of Christmas and Easter.

The scene from Mark is an on-the-ground look at the mechanics of the incarnate life of God – the presence within our midst of another entity, one not solely human. If you've ever toured a big military airplane or ship or any big factory or kitchen, unless you worked there, you might have been struck by the combination of the grand and the mundane. There are huge machines and complicated processes that baffle the mind going on right next to old coffee cups, bathroom signs, old pairs of gloves. This is Mark's story. God, the living God, is walking around in the dust and by the lake where some people are fishing. The whole of Mark's Gospel is about this juxtaposition of the wondrous power and presence of the living God, sojourning out on the beaches and byways with simple working folks.

So Jesus just tells these fellows to follow him, and they do. That's pretty amazing too when you think about it. If somebody walked into your job tomorrow and said, "Follow me," they would probably at least have to make you a fat written offer before you'd go. Ok, for some of us, it wouldn't have to be a very fat offer, but still. This story is a historically unique occurrence; the only way to understand it is to hold the grandeur and the mundanity of it together in our hearts; that's the identity of Christ.

When Jesus says “Follow me,” he means that the people should start trying to do as he does. If there is relevance to us in these stories, it is a spiritual, attitudinal, vocational relevance, because Jesus is no longer around to physically follow. Jesus of course knows this – he is the ages of ages; he knows pretty much everything. Jesus is nowhere to be seen and everywhere to be followed. Our whole attitude and outlook on life has to change.

This idea is what Paul’s remarks are good for. “Behave as if you have no spouses, no possessions, no emotions, etc., because the time is fulfilled.” The image is both compelling and provoking, like so much of Paul’s rhetoric. Moments of Aha! alternate maddeningly with moments of No Way! Paul reminds us that fulfilment comes at a price. As the great preacher says, “It’s free but it ain’t cheap.” (And of course Jesus will give us the definitive example of paying the price...next season). For us the price is to adopt no less an attitude than that: whatever we have, whatever we love, whatever we are is nothing until we know that it is all both from and for God.

This is what the psalmist means: “For God alone my soul in silence waits.” Nothing else will provide peace, fulfillment and a happy death. Not just fill-ment, but full-fulfillment. Filled full to overflowing, our cups runneth over. And what is the meaning of our payment, our sacrifice if you will? Not so much a debt or obligation, as a balance to strike, a Christly karma, a satisfaction to the best of our ability of God’s plan: God has filled us full, and we are to fulfill God.

Paul was wrong about the end. 2000 years later we can safely argue that ‘imminent’ is a vague term. But with the coming into the world of Jesus, the end is indeed ordained and fulfilled. Opportunity is here with us for an end to our old compulsion to wrong actions born of fear, and their dire consequences to ourselves and all creation. We have been given a new beginning, a new potential for life, a life wherein we are perfectly free to be the kind of people we want to be; to do right things and let go of their results; to make bi-partisan agreements even in times of challenge and controversy; to take care of the fish and the fisherpeople.

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. **Amen.**

Loving God, you fill all things with a fullness and hope that we can never comprehend. Thank you for leading us into a time where more of reality is being unveiled for us all to see. We pray that you will take away our natural temptation for cynicism, denial, fear and despair. Help us have the courage to awaken to greater truth, greater humility, and greater care for one another. May we place our hope in what matters and what lasts, trusting in your eternal presence and love. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our suffering world. Please add your own intentions, silently or aloud. Knowing that you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all your holy names O gracious God. **Amen.**

Hymn 625 – Ye Holy Angels Bright Vss. 1, 2 & 4

Ye holy angels bright, who wait at God's right hand,
Or through the realms of light fly at your Lord's command,
Assist our song, for else the theme too high doth seem for mortal tongue.

Ye blessed souls at rest, who ran this earthly race
And now, from sin released, behold your Savior's face,
His praises sound, as in his sight with sweet delight ye do abound.

My soul, bear thou thy part, triumph in God above:
And with a well-tuned heart sing thou the songs of love!
Let all thy days till life shall end, whate'er he send, be filled with praise.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAwTDwbVM3o>

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 now, this day and forevermore may the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier remain with you and those whom you hold in your heart. **Amen.**