

Sunday Missive – July 19, 2020



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The Seventh Sunday After Pentecost

Greetings, One and All, and welcome back to St. Peter's by the Sea here in beautiful Morro Bay. Today, Marti Lindholm, Nancy Castle and I return to offer you a service of prayer, word and song with love. Today, we are joined in this by Jeff Wheelwright on Basso Profundo. This Sunday Missive will be delivered live on Facebook at 11:00 A.M. on Sunday, July 19. 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, and prayer responses ready to speak. 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. 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. Be sure to scroll down to "Posts" to see our service!

https://www.facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel&eid=ARAUeH_DsZ84100oD17S5TKTJa9nPInamVaKKBDjC7zKd1Kvws0elUTfHmPTVaREXk2ty7B1jSL3bJxW

Grace to you and peace, from God our Creator and Christ our Redeemer, who with the Holy Spirit sanctify and nourish 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 by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may more perfectly love, and more worthily magnify your holy Name. Amen.

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of Jesus, who is Christ our Lord, and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Hymn 657

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never, nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUjvvjEPS6I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1UvqC8CQbE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVmwJK6GcC4>

Genesis 28

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and because the sun had set, stayed there for the night. Taking a stone, he lay down and put it under his head. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And in the dream, the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your forefathers Abraham and Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" This is none other than the house of God, and this is truly the gate of heaven." Jacob awoke early in the morning and took the stone from under his head. He set it up for a marker and poured oil on the top of it, and he called that place Bethel. The name of the city had been Luz.

Psalm 139

O Lord, you know my resting and my **rising*** You discern all my thoughts from **afar**.

You mark when I walk or lie **down*** You know all my ways through and **through**.

Before ever a word is on my **tongue*** You know it, O Lord, through and **through**.

Behind and before, you **besiege me*** Your hand is ever laid **upon me**.

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*** To dwell at the sea's furthest **end**.

Even there your hand would **lead me*** Your right hand would hold me **fast**.

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

See that I follow not the paths of the **wicked*** But lead me in the ways of life **eternal**.

A Reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter Eight

So then, sisters and brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh -- to live according to the flesh— but to the Spirit. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit in us bearing witness that we are children of God.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed. For Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves groan inwardly while we wait for adoption and redemption. For it is in hope that we have been saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope: who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

HYMN 660

O Master, let me walk with thee in lowly paths of service free;
Tell me thy secret; help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear, winning word of love;
Teach me the wayward feet to stay, and guide them in the homeward way.

Teach me thy patience; still with thee in closer, dearer company,
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in trust that triumphs over wrong,

In hope that sends a shining ray far down the future's broadening way,
In peace that only thou canst give, with thee, O Master, let me live.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUkaK6ceJmY>

A Reading from The Gospel According to Matthew – Chapter Thirteen

Jesus said: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to the farmer who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. When the plants came up and bore grain, the weeds appeared too. The workers came and said, ‘Master, did we not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ They said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them out?’ But he replied, ‘No; in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and I will

tell the reapers to collect the weeds and bind them in bundles to be burned, but to gather the wheat into my barn.”

And he put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” He told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: “I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.”

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect all causers of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of God. Let anyone with ears listen!

Our so-called “News” these days doesn’t feel too new. The human race is beset by enemies from without – an invisible virus transmitted unwittingly by asymptomatic carriers – and from within: our own inability to attract and retain responsible, cooperative, wise and humble leadership. The only thing that really qualifies as true news manifests in individual stories: the transformation of individual hearts when people stop doing irresponsible things and begin to live in ways Jesus describes as “The Kingdom of Heaven.”

The good news of Jesus’ witness, literally “the Gospel,” consists of individual transformations, when people turn away from ingrained, in-bred, habitual selfishness and violent conflict. When this happens, it’s news. As long as we remain complicit, even if only by way of complacency in the ways of the world, the ways of the flesh as St. Paul repeatedly calls them, there’s no news; there are no surprises; it’s the same old story. But when we develop a sudden appetite for forbearance; for moderation, compromise and self-effacing cooperation, that’s a big change.

There may not be any visible sign of glory, as Caryll Houselander suggests, "But because in every town and village and hamlet of the world there are those who have surrendered their lives -- those who have made their offerings daily from the small grains of their common lives -- miracles of Love are happening all the time, everywhere. The Holy Spirit is continually descending upon the world."

The quality and character of this kind of change is unique and colorful, even as the results of such individual transformation tend to be modest tolerance for and involvement with the rest of humankind. There are innumerable ways in which a change of heart results in a change of life. The community of peacemakers that make up Jesus' Kingdom of Heaven grows in population and strengthens in popularity whenever such transformations happen, but the changes themselves, the turnings and healings are very much individual. As such, we can't judge one another's spiritual development. Well, we can judge, in fact we do it all the time; but we can't do so accurately, successfully or to any good purpose.

The mustard seed parable tells us that, just as one tiny seed of a notion or realization can lead to a change of heart, so one changed heart or transformed life can result in a wide and welcoming shady home for many others to share. Likewise the small measure of leaven that each of us becomes when we decide to work for peace and justice, can affect a whole batch of flour children. Each little deed and modest witness can aid the transformation of countless others: by association and by momentum.

When Jacob, in his dream observes the comings and going of the angels, up and down the ladder to heaven, he is undergoing the kind of transformation to which Jesus will refer. Jacob is transformed when he commits to an ongoing exchange of energy with God. The angels come down the ladder with the presence and power of Heaven, affording Jacob a glimpse of glory. With this newfound power, Jacob and those he influences adopt attitudes and take actions that glorify God, back up the ladder. Likewise we ourselves send the strength and hope of God's power back up the ladder through prayer and praise and peacemaking we do down here in the flesh.

The Sufis address this phenomenon of human potential thus: There is a light within every soul. It only needs the clouds that hide it to shift for the light to shine through. This is the light of revelation. It is like a lantern to us, it lights up every dark corner we wish to examine and gives an answer to every question we would ask. For Jacob that night, the clouds shifted. It is said that there is a certain kind of cobra with a diamond in its head. When it goes into the jungle, the cobra takes out the diamond, places it on a tree and by means of its light, it can see throughout the forest. When it is finished, it puts the diamond back in its head until it is needed again. From the moment of his revelatory dream, Jacob possessed his own diamond. He renamed the place Beth-El, the house of God, but it can hardly be a coincidence that the place was already called Luz, the place of light, the foundation of life.

Where Jacob is when this happens is significant. He's out in the scrub, in the wilderness, alone and cut off from his party, neither at his own home nor at his brother's. Neither here nor there; in a liminal state; on a threshold. What's important is that Jacob wakes up and smells the chai: "Surely God is in this place and I didn't know it." The story is reminding us that God is surely in every place and time. Do we know it?

The story says Jacob was using a stone as a pillow that night. This is not as nutty as we might think. In any museum of ancient art for example, you can see objects labeled 'head rest' that don't look too comfy but must do the trick. Furthermore, Jacob is on his way from one tough assignment to another, transitioning from dependency on others to leadership in his own right, when he is transformed and awoken. He had thought he had to do it all on his own, but he suddenly realizes that God is with him. Indeed, wherever he is, God is in that place, and the angels will be descending and ascending for him, as long as he has ears to hear and a heart to feel. When he wakes up, this newly transformed Jacob makes a shrine to commemorate the great good news: "Surely God is in this place."

Jacob's experience of revelation, his breaking news, like the parable of the weeds sown among the wheat crop makes it clear that God alone, the great instigator, the great harvester, the true soul of history; only God is capable of fully assessing and judging the transformations we undergo and the actions those transformations propel us to undertake. We do have criteria, especially the question of whether we would like to have those things said and done to us. But even if we are indeed fortunate enough to have ears to hear and are blessed enough to be listening, our own transformation will be an ongoing process, subject to arrested development or distractions and requiring the regular exchange of cosmic energy – the Holy Spirit at work -- with a power greater than ourselves.

We do not have the capacity to purify ourselves by ourselves; and we are certainly not capable of deciding who else is pure and holy. We can't make it our business to purify the wheat crop by weeding out portions of humanity, though many have tried. But if we cooperate humbly and seek to maintain our awareness that God is surely in this and every other place, our offspring will be as the dust, our love will echo to the ends of the earth and we can hope someday to leaven the whole barrel. Meanwhile, our responsibility, our control, our authority is only for our own attitude and actions towards ongoing lives of love. We must let go of our failures to achieve perfection.

Here is a version of Marianne Moore's poem, *Appellate Jurisdiction*:

Fragments of sin are a part of me. New brooms shall sweep clean the heart of me.
Shall they? Shall they?

When this light life shall have passed away, God shall redeem me, a castaway.
Shall He? Shall She? The Good News is, they shall.

LEVAS Hymn 203

There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain,
But then the holy spirit revives my soul again.

If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus, and say He died for all.

Don't ever be discouraged for Jesus is your friend,
And if you lack for knowledge, he'll ne'er refuse to lend.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okl2XbTM7xM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFMY4V7RdbU>

Prayers

O God of light and mystery, give us the faith to see you in the grey dimness of this time.

Give us the heart to hear, in the silence of the sick, the call to care for those in pain.

Give us the courage to find you where you do not now appear to be.

Give us the trust it takes to make our way through this uncertainty, this fear, this seemingly irredeemable sense of limitless loss to the recognition of the relentless hope that each seasonal cycle of life confirms in us.

You who made all things for our good and our growth, show us, too, now, the

power of darkness, so that we might see newly— beyond the ephemeral—to what are really the gloriously important things in life. Amen

And now, may the peace which passes all understanding keep your heart and mind in the knowledge and love of God in Christ. May God’s love be with you today and remain with you always. May you seek whatever transformative fires are necessary to bring you to such a state of grace that the spirit of love is your inspiration and the works of love your daily business.

If you would like to talk, or are in need of any assistance, please call your Rector, The Rev. Sidney Symington on (203) 209-2339 and leave a voice message, write to 545 Shasta Avenue, Morro Bay, CA 93442, or email: sssymington@gmail.com



american coot walking