

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost July 25, 2021

Hymn 616 Hail to the Lord's anointed -- Vv. 1, 2, 3 & 5

Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed, his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free;
To take away transgression, and rule in equity.

He comes with succor speedy to those who suffer wrong,
To help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying, were precious in his sight.

He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth,
And love, joy, hope, like flowers, spring in his path to birth;
Before him on the mountains shall peace, the herald, to;
And righteousness in fountains from hill to valley flow.

O'er every foe victorious, he on his throne shall rest,
From age to age more glorious, all blessing and all blest;
The tide of time shall never his covenant remove;
His Name shall stand for ever, his changeless Name of Love.

The Collect of the Day

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

1st Lesson -- 2 Kings 4: 42-44

A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of

grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So he repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.

Psalm 145

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord* And all your faithful shall bless you.

They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom* And tell of your works of power,

Make known to all people your mighty deeds* And the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom* And your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The Lord upholds all who are falling* And raises up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all look to you, O Lord* And you give them their food in due season.

You open your hand* And satisfying the desire of every living thing.

The Lord is near to all who call on him* To all who call on him in truth.

He fulfills the desire of all who fear him* He also hears their cry, and saves them.

2nd Lesson -- Ephesians 3: 14-21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn 653 Dear lord and father of mankind -- Vv. 1, 3 & 5

Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways!
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind, in purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee! O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee the silence of eternity
Interpreted by love!

Breathe through the heats of our desire thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire; speak through the earthquake,
wind, and fire, O still, small voice of calm.

The Holy Gospel according to John 6: 1-21

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus

went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

Who is this King of Glory? -- Pent+9B

It is remarkable how the seemingly dry and implausible narratives of the Hebrew Bible can serve as a mirror to our civilization, showing us who we really are, and what the consequences might be of our behaviors. The theology of these books comprises at least three central ideas: 1. That human life exists under the supervision of a greater cosmic moral order established by God. 2. That proper forms of worship are of primary importance to the health of the community. And 3. That God's thoughts are not only contained in the texts we have passed down, but also in the continuing interpretation of those texts today.

This summation of the ideas behind the stories is also a description of the theology of faithful living. Firstly, as with the Hebrew prayer from Deuteronomy: *Shema, Israel, Adonai elohenu; Adonai echad*: (Hear, O Israel, the Lord is thy God; the Lord is One). In addition, as #1 goes a step further to point out, we have not created ourselves, and neither can we change truth. If there is a power that can do these things, it ain't us; it is not our power. God may be in us or around us, but God is not us. Why the Shema is said so frequently is that we are pathologically prone to forgetting this fact.

When saying the first six words of the Shema, it is a universal Jewish custom to cover one's eyes with the right hand, allowing one to concentrate properly without visual distractions. Throughout the Talmud, the blind are called *sagi nahor* (full of light.) This is because one's physical sight, which gazes out at the mundane and materialistic world, often contradicts and weakens one's inner spiritual "sight."

Therefore, when, in the Shema we proclaim the oneness of God, we are affirming that true reality is neither what our eyes see nor

even what we experience in other natural and intuitive ways. By covering our eyes, we are indicating our desire to disconnect from the physical and connect to the spiritual.

As for #2, worship, we sing and pray and study and read and talk in church because we know that is the best way to sustain our community of faith for the fulfillment of our Great Commission. We don't worship because God needs praise to function, we worship because we need to be reminded of #1. God is reality and we are God's subjects. We are subject to reality; worship is our joyful and passionate way of doing that reminding. We say the Lord's Prayer about as often as Jews say the Shema, and for the same reasons. Lest we forget who's God.

Which brings us to the third of the three ideas: "That God's revelation is given, not only in past time, but in the present – a living word of truth." In other words, there is not only the history of God's deeds in the past, and what attempts we – in our stiff-necked way -- have made throughout history to understand, capture and mold that reality for ourselves. There is also the observation that whatever godly truths we think we have apprehended, through scripture, in tradition and by reason, God continues to create, and, if we would flourish as godly beings, we must make it our life's business to stop, look and listen to the author of creation, who is ever creating anew.

It follows that God's reality is inestimable and unfathomable; it demands our continual refreshment and the revision of our interpretations of what God wants or what reality is. Human society must advance spiritually if the species is to survive. Ultimately, the scriptures convey the one great truth that must eventually become clear to all: Put simply: Gentility, generosity and compassion are the only things that will save us, whereas violence, greed and retribution will surely doom us. This is why Jesus says that all the law and the prophets hang on the intertwined and interdependent skyhooks of God and Love. This

is why every mainstream religion has a version of the Golden Rule.

We are reminded of the legend of Rabbi Hillel, one of the founders of modern Judaism, who lived around the turn of the millennium. Not the last one, nor even the one before that; he died in the year Ten. Apparently Hillel and Shammai two of the great elders of their time were approached by a Gentile who asked them to tell him all there is to know about scripture while he stood on one foot. Shammai laughed at the man and told him it was utterly impossible to do such a thing and he turned away. When the man turned to Rabbi Hillel, he spoke thusly: "That which is hateful to you, do not do to anybody else. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; stay and learn."

All the rest is explanation. Which means all the rest is interpretation. Our purpose is to continually interpret ourselves, our laws and our allegiances in the way of that orientation. Our vocation is to pursue whatever means we can discover of hastening the coming of a peaceful age. Our joy is in the possibilities that are created each time we take a step – personally or publicly – toward a time of concord and plenty for all.

As Diana Butler Bass puts it, "Near the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states the Golden Rule, the foundation of all the commandments: 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and prophets.' This was Jesus the rabbi at work renewing and reinterpreting the law and, in the process, claiming the divine authority to do so: he was both a teacher *and* a prophet. Jesus does not replace the tradition, he reimagines and expands, inviting an alternative and often innovative reading of the received Word of God."

We too must remain teachable. Society must act on what it has learned, rather than deny uncomfortable or inconvenient truths, such as those facing us now. Shema everybody. Hear, O world: God is God, and we need to be reminded of it. And God's plans for

an epoch of peace are constantly being revealed for us to follow. So remain teachable; keep your eyes and ears and hearts and minds open, for more is being revealed all the time, through social justice initiatives and new attempts to legislate fairness and justice in our land despite fierce resistance from those who would keep us stratified. More is being revealed in Science and Medicine every day. More is being revealed through individual transformation; through episodes of Golden Rule compassion, kindness, moderation, assistance and sisterhood. Shema everybody.

After all, “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; God has founded it on the seas, and established them on the rivers” and painted it in the skies. And “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false;” whose embrace of reality is recognized as the only means of their salvation. “They will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from God.” So ‘Get with it,’ the psalmist declares; ‘Civilization changes and so must you.’ It will continue changing until it reaches the point of concord and plenty and equal liberty for all. If it fails to change, it will fail to thrive. The universe will have to produce another species to replace ours. They will be a species who thrive on beauty and justice and truth, as we theorize ourselves to be, but this time with more truth and more humility. If we don’t change ourselves, we will always continue to do the same things wrong, and God will have to take another whack at it... this time maybe with no TV.

From my summer camp days, where the son of the fellow in question was my cabin mate, here is an example of Golden Rule theology come to life. We heard this story once every summer, and were given a card with the story on it to take home as a reminder:

“It was after nine in the morning of June 7, 1958, and the Air National Guard’s jet precision team, the Minute Men were flying at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, just outside Dayton, Ohio.

For the Minute Men this was just another show, and they were happy the skies were clear, the air was morning-smooth, and thousands of viewers would get to see the show.

Captain Johnny Ferrier flew an F-86 Sabrejet for his Denver-based team. After a routine maneuver, Ferrier's plane suddenly began rolling out of control; he was in trouble. Seeing him headed right for a residential neighborhood, his commander gave the command over the microphone. "Bail out, Johnny, bail out!" There was still plenty of time and plenty of room for him to bail out. The Colonel even issued the command twice more. Each time he was answered by a blip of smoke. He grasped the sense of it immediately. Ferrier couldn't reach the mike button on the throttle because he had both hands tugging on a control stick that was locked full-throw right. But the smoke button was on the stick, and he was answering the only way he could--squeezing it to tell Williams he couldn't let his airplane go into the houses of the neighborhood.

Captain Ferrier's Sabrejet hit the ground equidistant from four houses. There was nowhere in the vicinity other than that one backyard garden where he could have hit without killing people. He valued others' lives as just a little more important than his own. And that was all it took to save them.

On a small card Johnny Ferrier carried in his wallet wherever he went, are the following words: God First, The Other Fellow Second, and I'm Third.

Prayers

O God of heaven and earth, through Jesus Christ you promise to hear us when we pray to you in faith with thanksgiving, and so we pray for one another, for our families and friends. Thank you for all who care for us. Give us grace to serve Christ by serving our families, our neighbours and our communities; by loving others even as we are loved.

(Silence)

We thank you for the unfailing love you hold out to everyone in Jesus Christ. Comfort those in sorrow, need, sickness or any other trouble, especially Red, Katharine, Karen, are there others? (Silence) Bring healing and peace to all those we hold in our hearts this day. Give them courage and hope in their distress, and bless those who care for them.

(Silence)

We remember with gratitude the bounty of your creation in the natural world and the richness of this land. Help us and people everywhere to share with justice and peace the resources of the earth. Give to those in authority among us and to all leaders of the nations more wisdom, integrity, vision and compassion May their purposes and policies be only and always in the holy name of a healthy and equitable world.

(Silence)

We remember especially this day the truths of our nation's past. We open our hearts to examine, listen and understand the terrible trauma caused by human slavery and genocide in our past and pledge our strength in seeking to end the ongoing tragedies, injustices and falsehoods that keep our society so painfully and violently divided. (Silence)

We remember with thanksgiving all who have died in Christ, especially all victims of the Covid pandemic, all victims of gunfire in our land, and those we hold in our hearts, especially... (Silence) We rejoice at the faithful witness of your saints in every age, praying that we may enter with them into the unending joy of your heavenly kingdom. **Amen.**

Hymn 693 Just as I am, without one plea -- Vv. 1, 2, 5 & 6

Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt;
Fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, thy love unknown has broken every barrier down;
Now to be thine, yea, thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, of thy great love
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above: O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Hymn 410 Praise my soul the king of heaven

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; to his feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, evermore his praises sing:
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.

Praise him for his grace and favor to his people in distress;
Praise him still the same as ever, slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Alleluia, alleluia! Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like he tends and spares us; well our feeble frame he knows;
In his hand he gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia, alleluia! Widely yet his mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore him; you behold him face to face;
Sun and moon, bow down before him,
Dwellers all in time and space. Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise with us the God of grace.

Now may the promises of God working in you light up your eyes.
May the love of God revealed to you in Christ Jesus shape your living. May the truth in God's word guide your every journey and may the joy and hope of God's kingdom fill your hearts this day. And thus the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be with you forever. *Amen.*

Killdeer

You know how it pretends
to have a broken wing to
lure predators away from its
nest, how it staggers just out
of reach . . . if, at this moment,
you're feeling *metaphorical*,
nest can be the whatever
inside us that we think needs
protection, the whatever that is
small & hasn't yet found its
way. Like us it has lived so long
on scraps, on what others have
left behind, it thinks it could live
on air, on words, forever almost,
it thinks it would be better to let
the predator kill it than to turn
its back on that child again,
forgetting that one lives inside
the other.

Nick Flynn