

June 20, 2021 – The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Hymn 379 God is Love, let heaven adore him

God is Love: let heav'n adore him; God is Love: let earth rejoice;
Let creation sing before him, and exalt him with one voice.
He who laid the earth's foundation, he who spread the heav'ns above,
He who breathes through all creation, he is Love, eternal Love.

God is Love: and he enfoldeth all the world in one embrace;
With unfailing grasp he holdeth every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking under sorrow's iron rod,
Then they find that selfsame aching deep within the heart of God.

God is Love: and though with blindness sin afflicts the souls of all,
God's eternal loving-kindness holds and guides us when we fall.
Sin and death and hell shall never o'er us final triumph gain;
God is Love, so Love for ever o'er the universe must reign.

The Collect of the Day

O Lord, make us have perpetual love and reverence for your holy name, for you never fail to help and govern those whom you have set upon the sure foundation of your loving-kindness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Reading from the First Book of Samuel – 17:57-18-16

On David's return from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing,

and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

As they were coming home, when David returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the towns of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they made merry, "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Saul was very angry, for this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; what more can he have but the kingdom?" So Saul eyed David from that day on. The next day an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand; and Saul threw the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.

Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul. So Saul removed him from his presence, and made him a commander of a thousand; and David marched out and came in, leading the army. David had success in all his undertakings; for the Lord was with him. When Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in awe of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David; for it was he who marched out and came in leading them.

Psalm 9

I will give thanks to you Lord with my whole heart* I will tell of your wonderful deeds.

I will be glad and exult in you* I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

For you have maintained my just cause* You have sat on the throne giving righteous judgment.

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed* A stronghold in times of trouble.

And those who know your name put their trust in you* For you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion* Declare God's deeds among the peoples.

For the wicked shall depart to Sheol* All the nations that forget God.

But the needy shall not always be forgotten* Nor the hope of the poor perish forever.

Rise up, O Lord! Do not let mortals prevail* Let the nations be judged before you.

Put them in fear, O Lord* Let them know that they are only human.
Selah

A Reading from St. Paul's 2nd Letter to the Corinthians – 6:1-13

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

Hymn 535 Ye servants of God, your master proclaim Vss. 1,3 & 4

Ye servants of God, your master proclaim,
And publish abroad his wonderful name;
The name all-victorious of Jesus extol:
His kingdom is glorious; he rules over all.

Salvation to God who sits on the throne!
Let all cry aloud, and honor the Son.
The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
Fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give him his right:
All glory and power, all wisdom and might,
All honor and blessing, with angels above,
And thanks never ceasing and infinite love.

The Holy Gospel according to Mark - 4:35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Dads and Dynasties – Proper 7B

It isn't easy being King. For one thing, everybody is always taking sides, either for or against you; nobody just accepts you as a regular person, with flaws and fears, accomplishments and weaknesses; it's lonely at the top.

The name, "King" is most famously spoken by Americans when we talk about the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. who was so divisive as to draw fatal gunfire, but whose words continue to ring out in demand of peace among the people of our land, a peace as yet unrealized because it is based on the sharing of power and privilege which people will not do without struggle, and struggle is almost always won by the powerful. It's not easy being such a target as he was; it was lonely on his mountaintop. Likewise John F. Kennedy, whose tenure in the White House was nicknamed Camelot because he seemed like such a king. Expectations, mistakes, loneliness, early and violent death. And our beloved Elvis Presley, the King of Rock and Roll: Stardom, expectations, mistakes, loneliness, and early and violent death.

This has been a week where fathers around the country have come up against their own kingship, if you will. Not that our households are ruled by men any more, in the ways they once were, *danks Gott*; but fathers do have some kingly duties in families, and this time of graduations, commencement ceremonies and life changes is one when fatherhood often comes into focus. Our children finish high school, and often they go off to study, live and work somewhere else. Our time as their domestic leaders, as their kings if you will, comes to an end, whether we like it or not; whether we have been good kings or not. We hope –most of us -- that they will go in peace, despite our mistakes, but the real question for each of us is, how will we adjust to such endings.

I have a dear friend whose son has revealed his sexual orientation as gay this week. The son is in his early twenties; the friend, 60. Most of us have known about the lad for years, but the subject has not been discussed with his father, much less his grandfather. For the most part, the women, sister, mother, grandmother, are cool about it, but the taboo amongst the men, amongst the kings has been total, until now. Now his father has to let go of the expectation, which for him has been strong,

that his son will be like him. His son is going in peace, but will Dad? They've even found a way to tell the grandfather, who (again, thanks be to God) has been blessedly uncondemning.

Today we heard about another King, Saul, whose mistakes and violence almost succeed in ripping his country apart, but who still thinks he is right about everything. When the natural method of kingly succession, which would result in his own son being made king, is abandoned by Saul, the people become loyal to a new hero, David, and choose him as their heir-apparent. Saul is not happy. To make matters worse, his own son, Jonathan immediately recognizes the new king and supports him. At one point Saul orders that Jonathan be killed, but the soldiers refuse to obey.

Depending on how you interpret the text, Jonathan either gives his entire political and spiritual allegiance to David the minute they meet, or literally falls in love with him and becomes his sexual partner...or both. The genius of the scripture is in the way it makes us understand and accept that both interpretations are valid and lead to the same place: the king must relinquish his power. Change is happening. The sons will go, the people will move on. It's only a question of whether the king will depart in peace. Everybody's talking 'bout the new kid in town; they will never forget you Saul, til somebody new comes along.

Instead, Saul tries to spear David to the wall in the palace while David is playing his lyre -- presumably in the music room -- tries to spear him twice and misses. Among the future king David's accomplishments, we remember, is the composition of the Psalms, like the one we sang today, #9, #9. Perhaps this is what he was singing when Saul came around the corner with a spear and tried to pin him to the wall:

...the **Lord** sits enthroned for ever. **He** has set up his throne for judgment;
He will judge the world with justice; **he** will judge the peoples with his truth.

The Kings have fallen in the pit which they made, their feet caught in the snare they laid. The wicked are snared in the work of their own hands.

for the needy shall not always be forgotten nor the hopes of the poor be in vain.

Arise, Lord, let men not prevail! Let the Kings be judged before you.
Lord, strike them with terror; let the Kings know they are but men.

And our text tells us that the Lord left Saul, because he could not relinquish his kingship, because he could not let go.

The Bible is very insistent on this point. Remember that David, the Bethlehemite is to become the ancestor of Jesus, God's very self. David becomes King eventually, and some of the mistakes of his kingship are even bigger and more violent than Saul's. David must mourn his own sons, not one but two of whom are killed as a direct result of his inability to relinquish what is not his to own or control, first Absalom, and later the firstborn of David and Bathsheba. David only survives for us because he comes to understand how wrong he was and repents. We cannot escape the fact that fathers and kings must let go in peace, it is the will and the way of God.

You will perhaps remember the great Stanley Kramer film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, wherein Spencer Tracy has to let go of his daughter. Tracy was himself close to death during the shooting of the film, he could only work a few hours a day. His performance with Katherine Hepburn is beyond magnificent; she was in reality the love of his life; he died a few days after the film was completed.

There is a beautiful scene in the film that speaks to us today in no uncertain terms. The father of Sidney Poitier's character is played by the actor, Roy Glen who angrily tells his son to show respect by adhering to his wishes and renouncing his love for Spencer Tracy's daughter because the couple are of different ethnicities. Glen's character is a retired mailman who has made huge sacrifices to put his son through medical school. "Do you know I carried that bag 40,000 miles for you, you owe me." His son responds, "Even if you carried it a million miles, I don't owe you. You did what you were supposed to do just as I will for my son if I ever have another one." (one has died in a crash along with Poitier's first wife). "Dad...Dad," he says, "you are my father, I am your son. I love you. I always have and I always will. But you think of yourself as a colored man; I think of myself as a man."

This week our nation established an official day, June 19, Juneteenth as it is known, to recognize and commemorate the awareness we are still painfully acquiring that, king or pauper, slave or free, in God's eyes there are no colored men, only men. It is fitting that Juneteenth should occur next to Fathers' Day, when people everywhere give thanks and remember their fathers' love. But also it is a day when fathers everywhere are bidden to the hard work of understanding where we have been wrong, repenting, helping to bring about useful change as we repeat this simple prayer: "Help me O God, let go in peace, for I would love and serve the Lord.

The Prayers of the People

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. We remember especially the fathers of this world today. Grant them forbearance, vulnerability, humility and compassion. Relieve the fears and sorrows of all children whose fathers are absent or hurtful. And give us grace to serve Christ by serving our children, our neighbors 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 Sue, Katherine, 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 your many gifts to us in the natural world and in the richness of this land. Help us and people everywhere to share with justice and peace the resources of the earth. Give more wisdom, integrity, vision and compassion to those in authority among us and to all leaders of the nations. 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 to end the ongoing tragedies, injustices and falsehoods that keep our society so shamefully 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 all of our fathers and father-figures who are no longer with us in person but live on in our hearts. (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.

LEVAS Hymn 1 – Lift every voice and sing Vss 1 & 3

Lift ev'ry voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty.
Let our rejoicing rise high as the list'ning skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us.
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way,
Thou who hast by thy might led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee;
lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee;
Shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand,
True to our God, true to our native land.