

Holy Baptism and Feast of the Ascension -- May 16, 2021

Hymn 460 – Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

Alleluia! sing to Jesus! his the scepter, his, the throne;
Alleluia! his the triumph, his the victory alone;
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation hath redeemed us by his blood.

Alleluia! not as orphans are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia! he is near us, faith believes, nor questions how:
Though the cloud from sight received him, when the forty days were o'er,
Shall our hearts forget his promise, "I am with you evermore"?

Alleluia! Bread of Heaven, thou on earth our food, our stay!
Alleluia! here the sinful flee to thee from day to day:
Intercessor, friend of sinners, earth's Redeemer, plead for me,
Where the songs of all the sinless sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia! King eternal, thee the Lord of lords we own:
Alleluia! born of Mary, earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne:
Thou within the veil hast entered, robed in flesh, our great High Priest:
Thou on earth both Priest and Victim in the eucharistic feast.

Celebrant Blessed be God: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer

People *And blessed be God's kingdom, now and forever. Amen.*

Celebrant There is one Body and one Spirit;

People *There is one hope in God's call to us;*

Celebrant One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

People *One God and Author of all.*

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People *And also with you.*

Celebrant Let us pray

Collect of the Day

Grant, we pray, Almighty God, that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into heaven, so we may also in heart and mind there ascend, and with him continually dwell; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

A Reading from The Acts of the Apostles – Chapter 1

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, “Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus— for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) “For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it’; and ‘Let another take his position of overseer.’ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Psalm 1

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked* Or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers.

Their delight is in the law of the Lord* And on God’s law they meditate day and night.

They are like trees planted by streams of water* They yield their fruit in due season.

Their leaves do not wither* In all that they do, they prosper.

The wicked are not so* They are like chaff the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand when the judgment comes* Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord watches over the ways of the righteous* But the ways of the wicked will perish.

A Reading from the First Letter of John – Chapter 5

If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son.

Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Hymn 435-At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow

At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
Every tongue confess him King of glory now;
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord,
Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season, to receive a Name
From the lips of sinners, unto whom he came,
Faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,
Brought it back victorious, when from death he passed;

Name him, Christians, name him, with love strong as death,
Name with awe and wonder and with bated breath;
He is God the Saviour, he is Christ the Lord,
Ever to be worshiped, trusted, and adored.

The Holy Gospel According to Luke – Chapter 24

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he

opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Ascension Day, which officially occurred on Thursday, is established to commemorate the taking up of Jesus – after he awoke from being dead – to heaven, to live forever with God until the end of time. The Ascension is, of course a crucial element of the Christian story because if Jesus had not ascended, he ought to be still around somewhere in the flesh – still on the road, still touring, or living in Caracas, or Carpinteria, or Kathmandu. As it is, Jesus the Christ left his mortal existence to take on a purely spiritual one, where he is alive and well in the hearts and minds and hands of people everywhere.

Sometimes it's hard to keep track of every commemorative day in the Christian calendar because the Gospel is with us day in and day out in its entirety. Every day is one of incarnation, transfiguration, atonement, crucifixion, resurrection... and also ascension. If any of these events had not taken place, the whole picture would be altered to the point of unrecognition. Nevertheless, it is meet and right to consider the particular picture on the pertinent day. Thursday was Ascension Day, so let us think about what it might mean to ascend with Christ. In a week when one of our local peace officers has been senselessly killed in the line of duty, we would do well to remember what Albert Schweitzer said, "It is only an ethical movement that can rescue us from the slough of barbarism, and the ethical comes into existence only in individuals. The final decision as to what the future of a society shall be depends not on how near its organization is to perfection, but on the degrees of worthiness of its individual members. That is why it is the duty of individuals to rise to a higher conception of

their capabilities and undertake again the function that only the individual can perform: that of producing new spiritual-ethical ideas," close quote. This is what is meant by picking up our cross and following Jesus. This is our Great Commission; herein lies the meaning of our lives.

Matthias was the Apostle chosen as a replacement following Judas Iscariot's betrayal and subsequent suicide. There is no mention of Matthias in the Gospels, but according to *Acts*, he had been a follower since the time of Jesus' baptism by John until the Ascension. Peter proposed nominating two possible choices to replace Judas, then all the assembly prayed, then they cast lots and the lot fell to Matthias. So he was numbered with the other eleven and was present with them at the Christian Pentecost. In other words, they flipped a coin, and Matthias picked up his cross.

No further words about Matthias are to be found in the New Testament, but there is a wild array of conflicting information from other sources: One Eusebius refers to him as "Tolmai." Clement of Alexandria says some identified him as Zacchaeus; but the *Clementine Recognitions* say he's really Barnabas; meanwhile, Hilgenfeld thinks he is the same as Nathanael in the Gospel of John. The tradition of the Greeks holds that St. Matthias planted the faith in Cappadocia and along the coast of the Caspian Sea. According to Nicephorus, Matthias preached the Gospel in Judaea, and later in the region of Colchis, now part of modern-day Georgia.

On the other hand, I kid you not, the *Synopsis of Dorotheus* records: "Matthias preached the Gospel to barbarians and meat-eaters in the interior of Ethiopia, around the sea harbor of Hyssus, at the mouth of the river Phasis. He died at Sebastopolis, and was buried there, near the Temple of the Sun." In short, it seems as though Matthias could have been just about anyone who agreed to share by word and example the good news of God in Christ. His significance boils down to this sentence: "He took his place among the Eleven." Which is all any of us can do.

Fast-forward to November 1941, USA. "King Biscuit Time" went on the air on station KFFA, out of Helena, Ark. It was the first show to feature the Mississippi Delta blues, and a young sharecropper named

Riley King heard it on his lunch break at the plantation. A largely self-taught guitarist, he now knew what he wanted to be when he grew up: a musician on the air. That was his cross, and he picked it up.

King Biscuit Time featured Rice Miller, a primeval bluesman and one of two performers who worked under the name Sonny Boy Williamson. King, then 22, went to see Miller in Memphis, looking for work. Beale Street, lay 130 miles north of Berclair, MS – just outside Itta Bena – where King was born, and to him, Memphis looked like a world capital. Mr. Miller had two performances booked that night, one in Memphis and one in Mississippi. He handed the lower-paying nightclub job to Mr. King. It paid \$12.50. Mr. King was making about \$5 a day on the plantation. He never returned to his tractor, according to his *Times* obituary.

Riley B. King, who came to be known as “Blues Boy,” or “B.B.” for short, died in 2015 at the age of 89, after carrying his music around the world with grace, passion and persistence. We aren’t all gifted with the kind of artistic genius as was he, but each of us does have the opportunity to carry whatever gifts we do have out into the world with grace, with passion and persistence; to take our place among the Eleven. BB said, “I tried to connect my singing voice to my guitar and my guitar to my singing voice, like the two was talking to one another.” In other words, he sought to integrate himself. What a simple but glorious purpose, to do have our hands do what our hearts and voices desire; as the old Scottish saying goes, “May your pulse beat as your heart would wish it.”

”I am the true vine, and God is the vine grower. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches.” Jesus sends the disciples out as individuals with the power to heal. He proclaims, explains and maintains that our individual recognition of the reality that all will be well, that our redeemer lives and God is with us even to the end of the age frees our fantasies of virtues attained and celebrated; frees our dreams of goodness, connectedness and integration, allowing them to become the realities of our lives lived, our living sacrifice, our spiritual worship. We are to look inside ourselves, accept what gifts are ours

and be at peace so that we can go out and be healers in a struggling world, can yield the fruit of charity in our due season.

Said BB, "I never wanted to be like other (blues singers). I might like hearing them play, but I never wanted to be anyone other than myself. There are a few people I've wished I could play like, but when I tried, it didn't work." When we embrace our own singularity amidst the multitude of God's people, our own gifts and opportunities to lift our own voices in song and prayer and protest, and raise our own hands in creativity, industry and charity, our leaves shall never wither, the books of our lives will continue to grow just as long as the prayers we offer and the deeds we do echo in the prayers and the lives of those we come to love.

Each day we may be satisfied a little, but often we may be disappointed too – in the world and in ourselves – for what is left undone at the day's end. But the love of God assures us that what's important is not so much what we have done – or left undone – but what we're aiming to do next, that matters most.

But for those who have been given the gift of the desire for self-knowledge, humility and usefulness, this enduring love of God allows us to be – whatever else we are – joyful, thoughtful and helpful human beings. We become less afraid of insignificance and vulnerability, more willing – when challenged, criticized or threatened – to ask whether those who disagree with us are impertinent and wrong and thus objectionable instead of finding them unwelcome and upsetting because their criticism of us is true. Old or young, we become more teachable, more resilient, more tolerant of ourselves and others, more willing to extend ourselves for the sake of love. This is the task ahead for you, Bill, as it is indeed the task for each of us.

Let's let BB have the last words: "You only live but once, and when your died your done, so let the good times roll." And "When I do eventually drop, I pray to God it'll happen in one of three ways. Firstly, on stage or leaving the stage, then secondly in my sleep. And the third way? You'll have to figure that out for yourself." And "I never use that word, 'Retire' ...there are so many sounds I still want to make, so many things I haven't yet done."

The Holy Baptism

Celebrant The Candidate for Holy Baptism will now be presented

Sponsors *We present Bill Lee Maddox to receive the sacrament of baptism.*

Celebrant Do you desire to be baptized? **Candidate** *I do.*

Celebrant Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God? **Candidate** *I renounce them.*

Celebrant Do you renounce the evil in this world that corrupts and destroys the creatures of God? **Candidate** *I renounce them*

Celebrant Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God? **Candidate** *I renounce them*

Celebrant Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?
Candidate *I do.*

Celebrant Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love? *I do*

Celebrant Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord? *I do.*

Celebrant Will all of you who witness these vows do everything in your power to support Bill in his life in Christ? **People** *We will!*

Celebrant Let us join with him who is committing himself to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Father?

People *I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth*

Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

People *I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord; he was conceived by the power of the holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.*

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

People *I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the*

communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers?

People ***I will, with God's help.***

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People ***I will, with God's help.***

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ? **People** ***I will, with God's help.***

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself? **People** ***I will, with God's help.***

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People ***I will, with God's help.***

Celebrant Let us now pray for Bill, who is about to receive the Sacrament of new birth. (please respond: ***Lord, hear our prayer***)

Deliver him, O Lord, from the ways of sin and death. ***Lord, hear our prayer.***

Open his heart to your grace and truth. ***Lord, hear our prayer***

Fill him with your holy and life-giving Spirit. ***Lord, hear our prayer***

Keep him in the faith and communion of your holy Church. ***Lord, hear our prayer***

Teach him to love others in the power of the Spirit. ***Lord, hear our prayer***

Send him into the world in witness to your love. ***Lord, hear our prayer***

Bring him to the fullness of your peace and glory. ***Lord, hear our prayer***

Celebrant Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ your Son may live in the power of his resurrection and look for him to come again in glory; who lives and reigns now and forever. *Amen.*

(The Celebrant blesses the water, saying) We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We give thanks for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in joyful obedience, we bring into fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Now sanctify this water, we pray you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, that those who here are cleansed from sin and born again may continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Savior. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever. *Amen.*

The Baptism

Bill I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. *Amen.*

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon this your servant the forgiveness of sin, and have raised him to the new life of grace. Sustain him O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give him an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. *Amen.*

Celebrant: Let us welcome the newly baptized, saying together,

We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Celebrant All praise and thanks to you, most merciful Father, for adopting us as your own children, for incorporating us into your holy Church, and for making us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints in light; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

Now, may the Creator of all that is, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named, grant you to be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit, that with Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith, you may be filled with the fullness of God forever. ***Amen.***

Hymn 494 – Crown him with many crowns. Vss. 1, 3, & 5

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne;
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own;
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
And hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed over the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save;
His glories now we sing, who died, and rose on high,
Who died, eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of heaven, enthroned in worlds above;
Crown him the King, to whom is given, the wondrous name of Love.
Crown him with many crowns, as thrones before him fall,
Crown him, ye kings, with many crowns, for he is King of all.