

The Sunday Missive – November 15, 2020



The Twenty-fourth Sunday After Pentecost

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Janis Johnson, Nancy Castle, Thelma Huchthausen, Diane and Roger Ludin and I bring you this service of prayer, scripture and song with love. Today we have the pleasure of welcoming The Right Reverend Lucinda Ashby, our bishop, who has seen us through this startling and challenging year. 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, November 15. 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.

And so we begin:

Grace and peace to you from God; may God fill you with truth and joy. May the Lord bless you and keep you this day, for this is the day which the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn 427 – When Morning Gilds the Skies

When morning gilds the skies, my heart, awaking, cries,
May Jesus Christ be praised! When evening shadows fall,
This rings my curfew call, may Jesus Christ be praised!

When mirth for music longs, this is my song of songs:
May Jesus Christ be praised! God's holy house of prayer
Hath none that can compare with: Jesus Christ be praised!

No lovelier antiphon in all high heaven is known
Than, Jesus Christ be praised! There to the eternal Word
The eternal psalm is heard: may Jesus Christ be praised!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLpftE_Ly6o

A Reading from the Prophecy of Zephaniah -- Chapter 1

Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is at hand; the Lord has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests. And on the day of the Lord's sacrifice I will punish the officials and all the king's sons and all who dress themselves in fancy attire. On that day I will punish all who leap over the threshold, who fill their master's house with violence and fraud. On that day, says the Lord, a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills. The inhabitants of the Mortar wail, for all the traders have perished; all who weigh out silver are cut off. At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs, those who say in their hearts, "The Lord will not do good, nor will he do harm." Their wealth shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.

The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. I will bring such distress upon those people that they shall walk like the blind; because they have sinned against the Lord. Neither their

silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath. This is the Word of the Lord

Psalm 116

Then I called on the name of the Lord* "O Lord, I pray, save my life!"

The Lord protects the simple* When I was brought low, God saved me.

Return, O my soul, to your rest* For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

For you have delivered my soul from death* My eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

I walk before the Lord in the land of the living* I kept my faith, even when I was greatly afflicted.

What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty* I will lift up the cup of salvation.

I will pay my vows to the Lord* In the presence of all God's people.

O Lord, I am the child of your serving girl* You have loosed my bonds.

I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice* And call on the name of the Lord.

In the courts of the house of the Lord* In your midst, O Jerusalem I will praise the Lord! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xGUYScj7eo>

A Reading from St. Paul's 1st Letter to the Thessalonians – Chapter 5

Now concerning the times and the seasons, sisters and brothers, you do not need to have anything said to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come: like a thief in the night. When they say, "There is peace and security," sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness; that day will not surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day, not of the night or of darkness.

So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep, sleep at night and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For

God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing. This is the Word of the Lord.

Hymn 490 – I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

I want to walk as a child of the light; I want to follow Jesus
God sent the stars to give light to the world; the star of my life is Jesus

In Him, there is no darkness at all; the night and the day are both alike
The Lamb is the light of the city of God Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus

I want to see the brightness of God I want to look at Jesus
Clear sun of righteousness, shine on my path
And show me the way to the Father

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmo6A86mis0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lmcz2T5hCsY>

The Gospel According to Matthew – Chapter 25

“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I was afraid, so I went and hid your talent in the ground.

Here you have back what is yours.’ But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You ought to have invested my money and I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have and use it well, more will be given; but from those who do nothing, even what they have will be taken away.’ This is the Gospel of The Lord.

“Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is at hand,” cries the prophet Zephaniah. What a contrast to the many admonitions we hear in Hebrew Scripture to make a joyful noise unto the Lord, to sing, shout, dance and play music. Yet the theme of silence is a frequent and important one in the continuous desire and struggle to determine how to act towards God, and in the effort to express our experience with the Ancient of Days.

“Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord’s wrath; in the fire of God’s passion the whole earth shall be consumed; for a full, a terrible end the Lord will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.”

Although composed in the 7th century BCE, this prophecy has eerie significance in the light of what eventually happened to Jerusalem when the Romans arrived. The collaboration between leaders and aristocracy among the Israelites with the Roman overlords drove a wedge into the heart of Jewish society, splitting the interests of an increasing number of working poor and those of the elite. It’s as if you had a country today where the government’s main concern was the protection and enrichment of the wealthy over working people, the poor, the natural world and peaceful relations with other countries.

Such a modern government would of course, be like the Romans, who were not interested in the integrity of Jewish culture; they just wanted control and money. Whenever anyone objected to Roman excesses, the reaction of the Romans was to make them worse. This divided the society further against itself, with those who collaborated distancing themselves as much as possible from the objectors and forcing the latter to bear every increase in burdens. When the burdens upon them got so excessive that even the collaborators had to object, it was too late. Jerusalem’s society was so splintered as to pose little common resistance or purpose. Roman soldiers destroyed Jerusalem entirely in 70 CE – it would not be a Jewish political entity again until 1948 – not quite 2000 years later. Clearly Zephaniah knew whereof he spake.

A country today whose governing powers fail to heed such lessons of history aren't fooling anyone but themselves. The so-called actions of God are the result of men's arrogance in the face of experience. This is ungodliness; this is idolatry; this is what sickens nations unto death. The nature of the action of God is not to interfere. Don't let's kid ourselves, such a nation either divides and destroys itself, or invites others to destroy it. "For we ourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When we say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon us, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!"

So much of human cultural history has consisted of trying to figure things out, nail things down, delineate parameters, specifications, statistics. And even when we're not doing that so avidly, so many of us are in the habit of letting others' ideas, images, and voices hold our attention all the time we're awake. The more technologically advanced we are, the truer this seems to be. We're very proud of, fascinated by and occupied with our machines, our latest electronic doo-dads. They are all supposed to be time- and labor-saving: faster chips, lighter platforms, easier navigation – ha! Whatever time and labor we save is inevitably gobbled up by more time with the machines, more labor expended in trying to pay for them. They are our wealth, and they separate us from the life of the Spirit if we let them.

As Sister Janet Ruffing has noted, "we are too busy to allow ourselves to be affected by the pain and suffering of others. We are too busy to be addressed personally by the social, political or ecological disasters occurring in our world. We are too busy to listen to our own feelings or those of others. Our busyness insulates us from care and from compassion." Our doo-dads and heroes have become our gods.

With, for and because of these gods, we are always making noise. The noise separates us from one another and prevents our hearing God's voice. It creates a din, under cover of which the unprincipled and ruthless succeed in controlling and enslaving us. The means used are mostly fear, the fear of not having as much wealth or doo-dads as our neighbors. As Mark Twain observed of us, more than 100 years ago: "Each man is afraid of his neighbor's disapproval, a thing which, to the general run of the human race is more dreaded than wolves and death."

Of course, if we had no social instinct, there would be no society at all. But ours has far exceeded its function. Subtly and powerfully it rules our lives. Our desire for an important place in society can tyrannize us and rule our

lives, as Bill Wilson put it, when thus out of joint, our natural desires cause practically all the trouble there is.

This is the darkness of which St. Paul speaks, the darkness that can overwhelm us and make us people of the night. Today we give thanks for the possibility of another way of living: Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

Prayers

God, lover of life, lover of these lives,
God, lover of our souls; of our bodies; of all that exists,
It is your love that keeps it all alive.
May we live in this love.
May we never doubt this love.
May we know that we are love,
That we were created for love,
That we are a reflection of you,
That you love yourself reflected in us,
And therefore we are perfectly lovable.
May we never doubt this deep and abiding and perfect goodness. May
we never forget, we are because you are.

We pray for the people of this hurting world, sojourning through a time of intense unrest, change, challenge, illness and growth. For world leaders, our country's new president, legislators and local councils, that those whom we trust to govern may do so wisely and compassionately, with justice, integrity and peace as their goals. Pray for the people of the world.

For this sacred and holy Earth, which, by our actions throughout the ages, we have abused and polluted with selfish and desperate abandon, that humankind may impel one another to live in the balance and harmony you have prepared for us and for all living things. Pray for our planet.

We pray for those in need, sickness or distress: for all who suffer from the discomfiting, disturbing and disastrous effects of COVID-19. We pray for businesses and workers who struggle to make ends meet, for those who are alienated and isolated; those sheltering in their homes, and those with no homes in which to shelter. Pray for the unemployed poor.

We pray for those who are far off and those who are near, especially Jan Swanson, Jim Harker, John Powell, Lynn Enns, Janelle Muff, and those we name now – silently or aloud -- beloved of this community who are sick, injured, undergoing medical treatment or in recovery. Pray for all who are in any need or trouble this day. ***Amen***

Accept, O Lord, the fervent prayers of your people. In the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give all of our thanks and praise, Creator, Savior and Spirit. ***Amen***

Lift Every Voice and Sing Hymn 60 -- How Great Thou Art

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul, my Savior, God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze.

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,
And there proclaim, my God how great thou art.

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

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

And now, may the peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and Christ. And may the blessing of God the Creator, the Redeemer, the sustaining Spirit be with you this day and remain with you and those you love always. Let us go in peace to love and serve The Lord. ***Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia!***