

The Sunday Missive – October 11, 2020



The Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Jan Swanson, Nancy Castle, Jeff Wheelwright and I bring you this service of prayer, scripture and song with love. If you go to our facebook page, you can watch and participate in this service from home: [facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay](https://www.facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay) Scroll down until you see today's Sunday Missive, anytime after 1 P.M. on Sunday, October 11. No facebook account is needed! 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:**

You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints and true members of the household of God. Grace to you and peace from The Lord our Creator and The Christ our Redeemer, who through the Holy Spirit live as one God. Let us pray.

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Hymn 513 – Like the Murmur of the Dove’s Song

Like the murmur of the dove’s song, like the challenge of her flight,
Like the vigor of the wind's rush, like the new flame's eager might:
Come, Holy Spirit, come.

To the members of Christ's Body, to the branches of the Vine,
To the Church in faith assembled, to her midst as gift and sign:
Come, Holy Spirit, come.

With the healing of division, with the ceaseless voice of prayer,
With the power to love and witness, with the peace beyond compare:
come, Holy Spirit, come.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aK7uvwk0JwI>

A Reading from the Book of Exodus -- Chapter 32

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come, make new gods for us. As for this Moses, we do not know what has become of him.” Aaron said to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me,” and all the people did as he asked. He took the gold from them, melted it down and cast the image of a calf; and the people said, “Here are your true gods, O Israel; these brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” And Aaron built an altar before the golden calf and proclaimed, “Tomorrow shall be a festival to our new god.” They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and sacrifices. The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel some more.

The Lord said to Moses, “Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them.” And Moses knew all that had happened. The Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now my wrath shall burn hot against them and I will consume them; and you will have to found a great nation.” But Moses implored the Lord his God, saying, “O Lord, let not your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? The Egyptians will say, that you brought them out only to kill them in the

mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' And so the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people. This is the Word of the Lord.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd* I shall not want.

Who maketh me to lie down in green pastures* Who leadeth me beside the still waters.

Who restoreth my soul* Thou leadest me in the paths of righteousness for thy name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil* For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou shalt prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies* Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life* And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

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

A Reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians – Chapter 4

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and

received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. This is the Word of the Lord.

Hymn 645 – The King of Love My Shepherd Is

Vss 1, 2, 5 & 6

The King of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his, and he is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow, my ransomed soul he leadeth,
And where the verdant pastures grow, with food celestial feedeth.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight; thy unction grace bestoweth;
And oh, what transport of delight from thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise within thy house forever.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkWmNMwy7Ps>

The Holy Gospel According to Matthew – Chapter 22

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatted calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest abused his servants and even killed some of them. The king was enraged. He sent troops to destroy those murderers and burn their city. Then he said to his people, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the celebration instead.’ And so they went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to

the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen." This is the Gospel of the Lord.

When Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said, "Come, make gods for us; as for this Moses, we do not know what has become of him." So they all took the gold rings from their ears, and Aaron cast them into a golden calf; and they cried, "These are your gods, O Israel! Tomorrow shall be a festival!" They rose early the next day, offered burnt sacrifices; they sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to revel.

Edwina Gately has observed: "We are too complicated. We have made God too complicated. We have been so anxious to define and to control, that God has been lost in all the definitions, the rituals and the rules. God simply is. And that, perhaps, is too simple for us." Like the Israelites, we have the tendency to demand immediate evidence of a God who sides with us, endorses our point of view, supports our program. If we don't get the manifestation we want quickly enough, we tend not to change our point of view; we change our view of God. Because of our impatience and inability to quietly go about the work that God gives us to do: compassionate forbearance, risky reconciliation, costly sharing, the knowledge and love of God is as changeable and fleeting as are the clouds. Each of us as individuals, and each of our communities in turn makes decisions and takes positions based on our version of righteousness, our synthesis of God. Then we wonder why so much conflict and frustration remain, and why violence, whether of the physical, economic or emotional sort is so much in the offing. It's because with separate gods, we are left to fend for ourselves, and strength is the measure of survival. We may celebrate that we have escaped the food chain, but the truth is more complicated. As if with a compulsive desire for danger, we have created a new food chain of our own to replace the biological one: economics.

Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times, but both we and our ancestors have sinned: our ancestors, when they were in the wilderness, and we ourselves in the marketplace – and the polling place. We have all committed iniquity. Nevertheless God regarded their distress, and listens to our cries as well. God

remembers the covenant, reveals compassion and steadfast love as the origin and purpose of our being. God simply is. Waiting for us to come. Let that not be too simple for us.

A great king announces a wedding banquet. But not only do the invited guests turn down his invitation, they make fun of the whole idea – don't take it seriously at all – and they go to the ball game instead. The king is enraged. He says to his lackeys, "Go downtown and invite anyone you find to my party." But when the king comes in he notices a man there who's not observing the dress code and says, 'How did you get in here without a tux?' The fellow is speechless. The king says, "Cuff him, shackle him, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen."

Now clearly this king had some self-esteem issues. Maybe the poor guy didn't have a wedding robe to wear to the banquet. Maybe he was just curious and hungry and wore the only robe he had. A dress code violation doesn't seem to warrant binding and exile, let alone gnashing of teeth. Matthew has not told us this story in the most decipherable way. But he is trying to remind us that there is a wondrous party going on, to which we are invited, but we have to bring all of our consciousness, all of our resources, all of our potential to the banquet hall, if we want to be there when they cut the cake.

We have been given the keys to the kingdom. We have been set free and invited to "feast at the banquet prepared from the foundation of the world." We have been promised that our descendants will be multiplied like the stars of heaven and occupy the kingdom forever. But still we tend to overcomplicate things by making idols of our so-called rights and hierarchies. Still we ignore or toss away the invitation, or don't take it seriously and doodle on it, or show up for life wearing a sarcastic sneer, or mocking grin; still we often respond to our opportunities for compassionate engagement with a flippant shrug, a hasty excuse, a convenient half-truth, or a blithe blind eye. Jesus is trying to tell us it's not necessary to live that way, and there is no future in such an approach to this raucous, rich, demanding party we've been invited to. The alternative is always available if we are patient and love peace:

As Paul writes to the Philippians, “The Lord is near! Let your gentleness be known to everyone. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Not only think on them, but have them be part of your society, incorporate them into your culture, vote according to them, make art of them. To paraphrase Martin Jean, Director of the Institute of Sacred Music, these blessings were bestowed on us, not just to solve problems or to create pretty, admire-able things, but rather to do transformative work for the sake of the world, so that eyes may be opened, tongues loosed, ears unstopped – to help move the world from brokenness to healing, from sin to redemption, from death to life. This is our real mission. We are here to use our imaginations and our intelligence to establish peace, not to win anything.

Prayers

Gracious God, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with your spirit and life; penetrate and possess our whole being, so utterly, that our lives may only be a radiance of Yours.

Shine through us, and be so in us, that every soul we come in contact with may feel your presence in our soul. Let them look up and see not only us, but also Jesus. Stay with us, and then we shall begin to shine as you shine; so to shine as to be a light to others.

This light O Jesus will be will be you, shining on others through us. Let us thus praise You without preaching, not by words but by our example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what we do, the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to you. **Amen**

(in unison)

***O God, make me a channel of thy peace:
That where there is hatred, I might sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.***

***Grant that I may not so much seek to be comforted as to comfort,
To be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive, in forgiving that we are forgiven,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2svZhZT6Pro>

LEVAS Hymn 109 – What a Friend We Have in Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus; all our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.

Oh, what peace we often forfeit; oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wvg4UESa4qo>

And now, let us go forth in peace to follow the good road. And let us go forth without fear, for the one who made us will always be with us, and loves us like a good mother. And the blessing of God Almighty: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer be with you this day and remain with you always.