

The Sunday Missive – October 17, 2021
The Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

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, God 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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24EFd8l2BEs>

The Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ you have revealed your glory among the nations: Preserve the works of your mercy, that your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Job 38:1-41

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? “Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?— when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped’?”

“Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, so that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It is changed like clay under the seal, and it is dyed like a garment. Light is withheld from the wicked, and their uplifted arm is broken. “Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this. “Where is the way to the dwelling of light, and where is the place of darkness, that you may take it to its territory and that you may discern the paths to its home? Surely you know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great! “Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail, which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war? What is the way to the place where the light is distributed, or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth?”

“Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt, to bring rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground put forth grass? “Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven? The waters become hard like stone, and the

face of the deep is frozen. “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth? “Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are’? Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind? Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass and the clods cling together? “Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their covert? Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?

Psalm 104

Bless the Lord, O my soul* You are clothed with honor and majesty,

Wrapped in light as with a garment* You stretch out the heavens like a tent,

You set the beams of your chambers on the waters* You make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind,

O Lord, how manifold are your works* In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there* Living things both small and great.

There go the ships, and that Leviathan you formed to sport in the sea* These all look to you to give them their food in due season.

When you give to them, they gather it up* When you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

May the glory of the Lord endure forever* May the Lord rejoice in creation

Who looks on the earth and it trembles* Who touches the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live* I will sing praise to God while I have being.

May my meditation be pleasing to God for I rejoice in the Lord* Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!

Hebrews 5:1-10

Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek." In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

455 O love of God, how strong and true

O love of God, how strong and true, eternal and yet ever new;
Uncomprehended and unbought, Beyond all knowledge and all thought.

O wide-embracing, wondrous Love, we read thee in the sky above;
We read thee in the earth below, In seas that swell and streams that flow.

We read thee best in him who came to bear for us the cross of shame,
Sent by the Father from on high, our life to live, our death to die.

We read thy power to bless and save e'en in the darkness of the grave;
Still more in resurrection light we read the fullness of thy might.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4eykxPI0C0>

Mark 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among

you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Every Last One – Proper 24B

Then the Lord asked facebook out of the whirlwind: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”

Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season? Mazzaroth are the constellations, so no.

“You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” In the religion of the Hebrews, it was said that Melchizedek was the first priest, after Adam himself. So he is the quintessential priest.

First of all, I don't know your experience, but if the disciples had a clue or two that Jesus was closely related to God – if they had been paying attention to the events of Jesus' life, and if they had been paying attention during any of the prayer lessons Jesus was giving them they would have known better than to say to him “Teacher we want you to do whatever we ask of you.” All kinds of problems with that request: Like praying for your team to win, which means praying for the other team to lose. Why would God do that? Would you want a god that would do that? “How would you like to have a god that will make any team win anytime the prayer is offered?” “Oh no, hold the phone, I only meant MY prayers...!” But the disciples, these two especially, James and John haven't been paying attention. Why it was only in the last chapter that they were up on the mountain hearing the voice of God say, “This is my son, my beloved; listen to him.” They heard it on the mountain, but by the time they got back to town, they had gotten it all mixed up, as in many a fairy tale.

In Mark's Chapter 11, verses 23 and 24, Jesus says, “Truly I tell you that if anyone were to ask in prayer for this mountain to ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and had no doubt in his heart but believed that it would happen, it would be done for him. Whatever you ask for in prayer, if you believe that you have received it, it will be yours.”

Prayer life as an extension of reality. God is no longer in the business of moving the mountains around or setting new stars in motion; where God matters these days is within the human heart. No one who knows this God will ask for a mountain to be thrown -- into the sea or otherwise. Neither can I tell you where you will sit in heaven. What I do know is this: the last shall be first and the first shall be last.

One of the running themes in Mark's gospel is the perpetual spiritual slow-wittedness -- not to say stupidity -- and self-involvement of the disciples. They don't seem to catch on too easily or remember too well the nature, power and intention of God that Jesus tries to convey and with which Jesus is imbued. They haven't been paying attention, so what they do hear and see they tend to misapply. And let us not delude ourselves by thinking that Mark hopes his readers will benefit by the dim example of the disciples merely as a form of amusement. Mark wants us to be aware of how difficult it was to accept the grace of God, even when God was in our very midst. Mark wants us to know that we are more like the disciples than we are unlike them. God wants us to know that it is not unforgivable to be like that -- far from it. As long as we want: to listen more closely, remember more fully, and change more deeply as our lives progress we are cooperating with God.

The old saw, "Be careful what you pray for, you just might get it," did not become a proverb because it was ludicrous hyperbole, but because it is ironically, eye-opening wise. Now any prayer that includes all contingencies of the circumstances being addressed, in detail and order of importance: any prayer that describes 'what all' we want out of a given situation becomes a very long prayer indeed. So, like James and John, we go for the Hail Mary, so to speak: "Oh God, make everything right," or we ask for a quick solution, the Quarterback Sneak, without any idea of what will come next: "God, just, just, just make me happy right now." One can think of lots of absurd examples of how the former strategy inevitably disappoints, and how the latter strategy might backfire, but the thing to remember is: We don't know where our present, immediate desires will lead. This is what Jesus tries to explain to his disciples: "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They replied, "We are able." But if

they had seen the crucifixion -- Mark's implied question hangs in the air -- would they have been quite so eager and confident? May God bless and keep all martyrs to the ages of ages, but not too many of us want to be forced to choose whether or not to be martyred. 'Not I,' said the little red ren.

The famous prayer, attributed to the great thinker Reinhold Niebuhr shows attention paid to what Jesus is saying to his people, "God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference; living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that you will make all things right if I surrender to Your will, so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with You forever in the next." Amen.

It doesn't say "awfully, very, or perfectly happy," it doesn't even say, "quite happy." It says, "reasonably happy." And the means of that reasonable happiness is recognized as being a better measure of wisdom, one that will help us know where we might best be directing our energies. Our piece of the book of Job today sounds like a courtroom drama: Can I bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? No. Can I lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season or guide the Bear with its children? Absolutely not. But do I know the ordinances of the heavens, and can I establish their rule on the earth? Well, I think the ordinances are those commandments, give or take, and yes, I guess I can start trying to establish them with me and anyone else I can convince. "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Prayer answered.

But instead, so often it is: "God! This is what I want, and now would be good." Usually we say please, which is nice, but we know full well it is God's plan and purpose to be with us in our defeats, neither to cause nor to prevent them. Jesus won't even let himself address who will sit at his right and his left forever in glory, much less who will and won't suffer disaster in this brief life of ours.

I once had a job at the John F. Kennedy Library in Dorchester, Massachusetts, minding the various video loops in the museum. So, about 50 or 60 times a day I heard those distinctive tones from 1962,

Kennedy saying, "There is always inequity in life. Some men are killed in a war and some men are wounded, and some men never leave the country. Some men are stationed in the Antarctic and some are stationed in San Francisco. It's very hard to assure complete equality. Life is unfair." Setting aside for the moment how unpleasant it must be this week in San Francisco on account of the demise of this year's baseball hopes, what Mark's Jesus is saying is that life – like baseball -- is fair, or was before human beings started making it unfair for each other. And because of that, our lives are best spent trying to make it fair again. There is a clear formula for doing this, which Mark has Jesus offer immediately -- he's got the folks in a teaching moment here: "Whoever wishes to become truly great among you must be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you must be servant of all. The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." The way for Jesus is the way for us.

We conveniently and understandably forget that truth when disasters unfold and we utter our foxhole prayers, but what God offers is cosmic insight, spiritual companionship, and an emotional frame of reference for this life of mortality and enterprise, suffering and joy, loneliness and love. God is not offering EMS Services, cannot be called in to strike others or to extract us from their clutches. God offers instead, perhaps we can coin: a PHH, a Permanent Heart's Home. As Inayat Khan has said, "By loving, forgiving, and serving, it is possible for our whole life to become one single vision of the sublime beauty of God." God's pursuit of our spiritual companionship is what led to the pure miracle of Jesus, who appeared so we might be ever more fully aware that we are always of, with, and in God: every first, last and middling one of us.

The Prayers of the People

Prayers for healing and strength: Sue, Karen, Katharine, Kelli, Gail, the family and friends of Jinny Cahill and all those we hold in our hearts this day. **For those who have died:** Jinny Cahill

Let us give thanks for all God's gifts so freely bestowed upon us:
For the beauty and wonder of your creation, in earth and sky and

sea. ***We thank you, Lord.***

For all that is gracious in our lives; all that reveals to us the image of Christ, ***We thank you, Lord.***

For our daily food and drink, our homes and families, and our friends, ***We thank you, Lord.***

For minds to think, and hearts to love, and hands to serve, ***We thank you, Lord.***

For health and strength to work, and leisure to rest and play, ***We thank you, Lord.***

For the brave and courageous, who are patient in suffering and faithful in adversity, ***We thank you, Lord.***

For all valiant seekers after truth, liberty, and justice, ***We thank you, Lord.***

For the communion of saints, in all times and places, for all the faithful, ***We thank you, Lord.***

Above all, we give thanks for the great mercies and promises given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord; to him be praise and glory, with you, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. ***Amen.***

The Prayers of the People

I ask your prayers this day for all who are in any sickness, need or any kind of trouble, especially Sue, Karen, Katharine, Kelli, Gail, the family and friends of Jinny Cahill, are there others?_____

Pray for those in distress and mourning.

I ask your prayers this day for those who have died, especially Jinny Cahill, are there others?_____ Pray for the faithful departed. ***Amen.***

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!

Ye nations of mankind, in this your concord find:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!
Let all the earth around ring joyous with the sound:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!

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

Gracious God, send us anywhere you would have us go ... only go there with us. Place upon us any burden you desire ... only stand by us to sustain us. Break any tie that binds us ... except the tie that binds us to you. Make us better in whatever we do; and work in us that which is well-pleasing in the sight of all Creation. And now, may the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer be with you this day and remain with you forever.

Amen.

The Dreamer

The night comes down, in ever-darkening shapes that seem
To grope, with eerie fingers for the window--then--
To rest to sleep, enfolding me, as in a dream
Faith--might I awaken!

And drips the rain with seeming sad, insistent beat.
Shivering across the pane, drooping tear-wise,
And softly patters by, like little fearing feet.
Faith--this weather!

The feathery ash is fluttered; there upon the pane,--
The dying fire casts a flickering ghostly beam,--
Then closes in the night and gently falling rain.
Faith--what darkness!

Djuna Barnes