

The Sunday Missive – October 25, 2020



The Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Janis Johnson, Mary Sue Gee, 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 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 25. 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

Eternal God, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning of hope: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks. **Amen.**

O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Child our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through the same Jesus, who is Christ our Lord, and who lives and regins with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn 525 – The Church’s One Foundation

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation by water and the word:
From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

Though with a scornful wonder men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed;
Yet saints their watch are keeping, their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

Yet she on earth hath union with God, the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we
Like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with thee.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96k3lbT-N-Y>

A Reading from the Book of Deuteronomy -- Chapter 34

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land: All the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea. The Lord said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there."

Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab. He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, but no one knows his burial place to this day. Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, and for all the

mighty deeds and all the wondrous displays of the Lord's power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel. This is the Word of the Lord.

Psalm 90

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations* Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth, from everlasting you are God.

You turn us back to dust, and say, Turn back, you mortals* For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.

You sweep us away; we are like a dream* Like grass that is renewed in the morning.

In the morning it flourishes and is renewed* In the evening it fades and withers.

You have set our iniquities before you* Our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

For all our days pass away under your judgement* Our years come to an end like a sigh.

The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong* Even then their span sees much toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

So teach us to number our days* That we may gain a wise heart.

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love* So that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us* And as many years as we have seen evil.

Let your work be manifest to your servants* And your glorious power to their children.

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us* And prosper for us the work of our hands— O prosper the work of our hands!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdcggZ70gqI>

A Reading from Paul's 1st Letter to The Thessalonians -- Ch 2

You know, sisters and brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. For even though we had suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God. Our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery. Rather, just as we have been entrusted by God with the message of the gospel, so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who alone tests our hearts. As you know and as God is our witness, we come not with words of flattery or a pretext for greed; nor do we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others,

though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. We were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. This is the Word of the Lord

Hymn 680 – O God, Our Help in Ages Past

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home:

A thousand ages in thy sight are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all our years away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.

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

A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew - Chapter 22

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Rabbi, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like unto it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" None of them was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did they dare to ask him any more questions. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Here in this most trying of years, professional sports have taken a lesser role in everyone's life than that to which we are accustomed. The seasons have been attenuated and remote; the brevity of their competitive arcs make it all seem a bit contrived. Still, it is exciting for those Angelenos to have their team in the NBA finals, and the World Series in the same year. And, because there can be only one championship team, somebody will inevitably be faced with that much-maligned adage, "It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game." People like to make fun of it, Vince Lombardi in particular, but it's absolutely true, of sports, and of life. Let's look at Moses. The Book of Deuteronomy is accepted as Moses' final history, and a lot of it is supposed to be his actual words. Led by him, the Israelites arrive at the brink of their promised destination. He is hale and hearty, his sight is unfailed, despite his 120 years. He's on the top of the mountain, looking down on the Promised Land, and then he just stops.

Now, you can't really say it's because he sinned – some people try to say it's because he sinned and doubted God – well come on, who doesn't? All the other people with him certainly did, and they go on to the Promised Land. The text says that Moses dies there. And yet, in a sense, Moses is the one who lives. The folks go to the Promised Land, but for Moses, history, his story lives on. It keeps working and living. We're still talking about it right now. Whereas once you and I attain the Promised Land, in a sense, we're done; once we get there, what else is there? But Moses is still operating through the power of story; he still a force.

And you know in baseball, they have all these statistics –incredible statistics. They're in love with statistics. Everybody talks about lifetime statistics, plate appearances, number of plate appearances with the left shoe untied, or number of triples when the moon is in the seventh house, or who knows, it can seem ridiculous. We're in love with these statistics, but really, that's not what matters. It's the play. The play. The playing of the game. The living of a life.

And so for our family today, playing the game of life is what Jesus talks about to the Pharisees: love of God and love of neighbor. It's the love of God that's ineffable, you can't figure it out. How do I do that? I can't go out and say, "I'm going to love God today." I haven't actually seen God, I can't touch God, it's something that I want to do, in my heart and soul, but I can't necessarily do it.

The singer Meatloaf, who often seems wiser than he knows, sings, "Once upon a time I was falling in love, now I'm only falling apart – nothing I can do, a total eclipse of the heart." That's loving God. We just have to decide to let our hearts and our vision be dominated by that kind of surrender, because we can't just go out and do it. We fall apart, and like Humpty Dumpty, all the horses and all the men, kings and otherwise, can't put us together again, only God's love can.

And so we turn to our neighbors, because they're the ones we have. I can actually get my hands on a neighbor, and see them and touch them and get aggravated by them and also help them and be here with them. The famous mystic, Theresa of Avila said this: "Though we do not have Our Lord with us in bodily presence, we have our neighbor, who for the ends of love and loving service is as good as Our Lord himself."

Jonathan Edwards is the famous American theologian. He said, "True virtue is benevolence to all beings, not just to selected ones." We're not measurers of charity. We're not arbiters of goodness. We're not gatekeepers of this love. Because in the resurrection of Jesus, God has flung the gates wide open. So we can go in and out and give and love freely – with no end in sight.

LEVAS Hymn 60 -- How Great Thou Art

A Swedish Folk melody with words by Stuart K. Hine, arranged by Craig Courtney **Mary Sue Gee, Soloist**

Prayers

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

In the course of the silence after each of the following bidding, please offer your own prayers, silently or aloud.

I ask your prayers for God's people throughout the world; for this parish family; and for all ministers and people. Pray for the Church.

I ask your prayers for peace; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all people. Pray for justice and peace.

I ask your prayers for the poor, the sick, the hungry, the oppressed, and those in prison. Pray for those in any need or trouble.

I ask your prayers for all who seek a deeper knowledge of God. Pray that they may find peace and understanding.

I ask your prayers for the departed, especially those we name now. Pray for those who have died.

Nurturing and healing God, we gather in a time of uncertainty, grief and longing. Our nation is threatened by political divisions and violence, imperilled by racial injustices, wounded by ongoing struggles for rights and equality of choice for all people, and our world continues to be plagued by the sickness, isolation and consequent damage of rampant disease. Draw our hearts together as we worship and celebrate your Name. Stir in us a desire for peace among the diversity of our numbers. Help us to work toward the mutuality and charity your Word so clearly demands.

Praise God for those in every generation in whom Christ has been honoured. Pray that we may have grace to glorify Christ in our own day.
Amen

LEVAS Hymn 18 – Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Refrain:

Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home.
Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see
Coming for to carry me home.
A band of angels coming after me,
Coming for to carry me home. [Refrain]

If you get there before I do,
Coming for to carry me home.
Tell all my friends I'm a-coming too,
Coming for to carry me home. [Refrain]

I'm sometimes up and sometimes down,
Coming for to carry me home.
But still my soul feels heavenly bound,
Coming for to carry me home. [Refrain]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Thz1zDAytzU>

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 the Creator, the Redeemer; the sustaining Spirit be with you this day and remain with you always.