

The Sunday Missive – October 4, 2020



The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Mary Sue Gee, Nancy Castle, Thelma Huchthausen, Diane and Roger Ludin 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 4. 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.

Holy and gracious God, you are always more ready to hear than we are to pray; more ready to give than we to desire. Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy; forgive us those things of which our conscience is afraid or ashamed; give us those good things for which

we know too little to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. *Amen.*

Hymn 304 -- I Come with Joy

I come with joy to meet my Lord, forgiven, loved, and free,
In awe and wonder to recall, his life laid down for me.

As Christ broke bread, and bids us share, each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one, and strangers now are friends.

Together met, together bound, we go our different ways
And as disciples in the world, to live and speak God's praise.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRollVjn5V8>

A Reading from the Book of Exodus – Chapter 20

Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin." This is the Word of the Lord.

Psalm 19

The heavens are telling the glory of God* The firmament proclaims God's handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech* And night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words* Their voice is not heard;

Yet their words go out through all the earth* Yea to the end of the world.

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun* Which comes out like a bride from her wedding canopy.

Its rising is from the end of the heavens* And nothing is hid from its heat.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul* The decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple.

More to be desired are they than gold* Even much fine gold.

Sweeter also are they than honey* From the golden drippings of the honeycomb.

But who can detect their own errors* Clear me O Lord from my hidden faults.

Do not let the insolent have dominion over me* Then I shall be innocent of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart* Be always acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

A Reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians, Chapter 3

I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus." This is the Word of the Lord.

Hymn 400 – All Creatures of Our God and King

All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voices, let us sing:

Alleluia, alleluia!

Bright burning sun with golden beams,

Pale silver moon that gently gleams,

O praise him, O praise him, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Great rushing winds and breezes soft,

You clouds that ride the heavens aloft, O praise him, alleluia!

Fair rising morn, with praise rejoice, stars nightly shining, find a voice:

O praise him, O praise him, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Dear mother earth, you day by day unfold your blessings on our way;

O praise him, alleluia!

All flowers and fruits that in you grow, let them his glory also show:

O praise him, O praise him, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0_8JnaOjSo

The Holy Gospel According to Matthew – Chapter 21

Jesus said, “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.” Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the

cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Here in our neighborhood, we are especially aware of the problematic quality of human will and undertaking. At once we can be overwhelmed by the beauty, complexity and unmanageability of the natural world around us, and also dismayed (or defiant) on the subject of human culpability for the neglect and destruction of the place. We are surrounded by a wild and wonderful array of creatures, geological formations and vistas that no human being could ever possibly make, but also confronted by countless examples of human stubbornness, ignorance and selfishness that are actively harmful to the ecosystem we inhabit, and detrimental to our children's future.

What may seem obvious, when stated outright, is easily forgotten when ecological crises loom: Creation – God -- is not at fault for whatever we realize has gone wrong with the world. Nature is not culpable for the things that are hard for us to deal with in her. Humans are the only moral actors on the planet. If there are other species in the cosmos who have what we might call consciousness, we haven't met them yet. If we ever do, we can only hope that they are less badly behaved than we are.

On this celebratory day of St. Francis of Assisi -- whose fame rests on the sublime spiritual foundation of humility, service to the poor and compassion for all creatures -- we are reminded, in Psalm 19: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork. Their voices go out to the end of the world."

Our hope lies in finding ways to cooperate with Nature, not ways to overcome it. Of course there are forces we can harness to build things

and feed people and improve our living conditions for a time, but ultimately, ours is a privileged existence, contingent on the maintenance of our working relationship with the planet. The words of Genesis that have God authorizing humanity to subdue the Earth have caused more problems than they have solved.

Here's a word or two by the great James Thurber that may shed some light on the problem: "How sharper than a sermon's truth it must have been for many human beings when they learned that the Bottle-Nosed Dolphin may, in time, succeed battle-poised Man as the master species on Earth. This prophecy is implicit in the findings of those scientists who have been studying, and interviewing dolphins in laboratories. It neither alarms nor surprises me that Nature whose patience with our self-destructive species is giving out, may have decided to make us, if not extinct, at least a secondary power among the mammals of this improbable planet.

"We shall, alas, not be on Earth to hear the lectures, and to read the reports on Man by a distinguished intelligence equal, and perhaps superior to our own. I should like to hear a thoughtful and brilliant dolphin cutting us down to our true size, in that far day when the much vaunted Dignity of Man becomes a Footnote to History, a phrase lifted from the dusty books of human sociologists and the crumbling speeches of obliterated politicians.

"Anyone, even a human being, capable of contemplation and the exercise of logic, must realize that what has been called the neurotic personality of our time is rapidly becoming psychopathic. Almost all Man's self-praise is exaggerated and magnified by the muddled and conflicting concepts of religion, sociology and philosophy. We are not, for instance, the most adjustable of creatures, but the most helpless and desperate, so that we have had to develop ingenuity of a high and flexible kind in order to survive. All of the other creatures of the Earth, with the exception of those we have made dependent by domestication, are more adjusted than we are, and can, and must get along without us. But we depend on many of them for our existence as we depend on vegetables.

"The penguins, for example eat plankton, a nourishing, if somewhat despondent food. Man, being Man doesn't care much for submissive

vittles, but loves to beat the hell out of some of his main dishes, and has devised a dozen weapons with which to kill them. The penguin and the dolphin, beholding the dismaying spectacle of human beings at table will surely exclaim, when they learn English, ‘what foods these mortals eat!’”

Blessed indeed are the animals, for theirs is the kingdom. It was theirs a long time before it was ours. The Earth is their vineyard. Even in the humanly-chronicled story of the Creation, the beasts were here first. Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms what the result will be if we treat the native inhabitants of the planet with disrespect, callousness and impropriety, if we hurt the children of the owner of the vineyard: “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.” Jesus is not waffling here. Our Creation narrative would have been more accurate and constructive if it told us to be fruitful and multiply discreetly, and rather than to subdue and control the Earth and its inhabitants, to care for, honor and learn from them, at the risk of our very existence.

We have to pay closer attention to the worth of all of God’s Creation, or we are lost. At last, here is a poem by Alicia Susan Ostriker that noses around the issue:

To be blessed, said the old woman, is to live and work so hard,
God’s love washes through you, like milk through a cow.

To be blessed, said the dark red tulip, is to knock their eyes out
with the slug of lust implied by your upended skirt.

To be blessed, said the dog, is to have a pinch of God inside you,
and all the other dogs can smell it.

The Prayers of the People

O God, here we are yet again, in our rage, our sorrow, our fear.

We are so angry we are tired. Between the virus and strife and fires,
We are perpetually in grief. We don’t know what the future holds.

We are a people of unclean lips. We live in and accept the Logic of Empire; its Impulse and Imagination course in our very flesh. Daily we manifest dehumanization, exclusion, and isolation.

And yet again we are here In faith, hope, and love.

We seek the wisdom and courage to sustain and deepen the solidarity We see in the tweets and in the streets.

May the Spirit of Revolutionary Love be present among us, fall fresh upon us, and breathe again on each of us.

May our work today not only cultivate Beloved Community, but help to rebuild the ailing Soul of your precious World. *Amen*

O God, the creator and preserver of all humankind, we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of people; that thou wouldst be pleased to make thy ways known unto them, thy saving health unto all nations. More especially we pray for thy holy Church universal; that she may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. Finally, we commend to thy gracious goodness all those who are in any ways afflicted or distressed, in mind, body, or estate; especially those whose lives are devastated by today's pandemic, by the ravages of fire, and by the injustices of our society that it may please thee to comfort and relieve each of them according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their sufferings, and a peaceful issue out of all their afflictions. All this we beg for the sake of Christ, Jesus. *Amen.*

Hymn 495 – Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus!

Hail, thou once despised Jesus! Hail, thou Galilean King!
Thou didst suffer to release us; thou didst free salvation bring.
Hail, thou universal Saviour, bearer of our sin and shame!
By thy merit we find favour: life is given through thy Name.

Jesus, hail! enthroned in glory, there forever to abide;
All the heavenly hosts adore thee, seated at thy Father's side.
There for sinners thou art pleading: there thou dost our place prepare;
Ever for us interceding, till in glory we appear.

Worship, honour, power, and blessing thou art worthy to receive;
Highest praises, without ceasing, right it is for us to give.
Help, ye bright angelic spirits, all your noblest anthems raise;
Help to sing our Saviour's merits, help to chant Emmanuel's praise!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ro9hJbqdEgo>

Thank you for joining us today. Be safe and well until we meet again.
Meanwhile, may thee peace of God which passeth all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God in
Christ. And may you know the blessing of God Almighty: Creator,
Redeemer and Sanctifier today and always. *Amen.*