

Sunday Missive – July 18, 2021
The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 11

Hymn 518 -- Christ is made the sure foundation Vv 1-3

Christ is made the sure foundation, Christ the head and cornerstone,
Chosen of the Lord, and precious, binding all the Church in one;
Holy Zion's help for ever, and her confidence alone.

All that dedicated city, dearly loved of God on high,
In exultant jubilation pours perpetual melody;
God the One in Three adoring in glad hymns eternally.

To this temple, where we call thee, come, O Lord of Hosts, today;
With thy wonted loving-kindness hear thy servants as they pray,
And thy fullest benediction shed within its walls away.

The Collect of the Day

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our
necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have
compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those
things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our
blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son
Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the
Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

2 Samuel 7: 1-16

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you."

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Psalm 89

I have found my servant David* With my holy oil I have anointed him;

My hand shall always remain with him* My arm also shall strengthen him.

The enemy shall not outwit him* The wicked shall not humble him.

I will crush his foes before him* And strike down those who hate him.

My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him* And in my name his horn shall be exalted.

I will set his hand on the sea* His right hand on the rivers.

He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father and my God* You are the Rock of my salvation!'

I will make him the firstborn* The highest of the kings of the earth.

Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him* And my covenant with him will stand firm.

I will establish his line forever* And his throne as long as the heavens endure.

If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances* If they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments,

Then I will punish their transgression with the rod* And their iniquity with scourges;

But I will not remove from him my steadfast love* Or ever be false to my faithfulness.

I will not violate my covenant* Or alter the word that went forth from my lips.

Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness* I will not lie to David.

His line shall continue forever* And his throne endure before me like the sun.

It shall be established forever like the moon* An enduring witness in the skies. Selah

Ephesians 2: 11-22

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision” —a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Hymn 529 In Christ there is no East or West

In Christ there is no East or West, in him no South or North,
But one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth.

Join hands, disciples of the faith, whate'er your race may be!
Who serves my Father as his child is surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both East and West, in him meet South and North,
All Christly souls are one in him, throughout the whole wide earth.

The Holy Gospel according to Mark – Chapter 6

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Afterwards, he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Family Matters – Pentecost+8B

Jesus was born in the city of David because, as a mortal he was of the house and lineage of David. He was heir to the throne of David; the new David himself. So goes our legend. One thing is very clear, as we

try to make sense of holy scripture: family matters. Again and again in the Hebrew Bible, we are given genealogies, relationships and the impact of family connections as food for thought and reason for action. Think of Cain and Abel, Leah and Rachel, Little Joe and his brothers, Ruth and Naomi.

Whereas modern-day ethical discussions and the works of popular culture often include disputes over how much favoritism to show family members over neighbors and strangers, the Bible, especially the Old Testament, seems to be concerned with something else. There are stories about near-kin favoritism and revenge over family insults, but far more plentiful and powerful are the ethical struggles that take place within families, amongst kinfolk.

Today we also hear a lot about “Community,” and a good thing it is, too. The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion struggle to maintain our community cohesiveness in the face of starkly differing points of view on a small number of volatile social issues – all having to do with gender. As an antidote, we have also been talking about *Ubuntu*, the Bantu word for the interconnectedness we all must seek if we are to live in peace. *Ubuntu* provides the focus for meetings of the faithful everywhere because our intention is the nurture of community. There is a saying the Romans used to sign letters, ‘*Si Vales, Valeo*,’ ‘If you are well, then I am well,’ which echoes *Ubuntu* perfectly. Community has been vital to every successful culture.

Professor Michael Eze writes, “*Ubuntu* is a demand for creative intersubjective formation: the ‘other’ becomes a mirror for me. Humanity is not bestowed upon my person solely as an individual, but upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other, so we need to participate in that creation: we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am.” Desmond Tutu offers another definition: “A person with *Ubuntu* is open and available to and affirming of others, who does not feel threatened that others are able and good. She or he belongs to a greater whole and is diminished when others are diminished, especially when others are humiliated, tortured or oppressed. *Ubuntu* speaks particularly about our interconnectedness; you can't be human all by yourself, and when you realize this you will become more generous.”

In the Hebrew Bible, *Ubuntu* on the smallest and most intimate scale -- the family -- is of primary importance. When we think about neighbor love, we had best begin with our neighbor across the stableyard, or the fishing boat, across the breakfast table... or across the pillow. *Ubuntu* begins at home. We might go a step further and say that it begins within our own hearts and our own heads, where the forces and voices of instincts and ideals, dreams and duties are often in competition for our attention and energies. Not only are we bidden to love our neighbors as ourselves, as in 'just like' we love ourselves, we are bidden to love our neighbors along with ourselves. 'As well as' can mean 'equally well,' but it can also mean -- does also mean -- 'in addition to.' One of the things that makes English so hard for people to learn is the multiple meanings we have for the same words, that's one reason we talk so much. There are others.

A useful way to think about this neighbour love equation might be as a kind of trinity: God, self and neighbor. Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is this first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Now wait a minute, if everything we've got is going into number One, then there will be nothing left for number Two? Unless of course Jesus is saying to love God completely because that will be the only way we can love both self and neighbor. Without the mediation of God's grace that faith adds to our personalities, we never seem able to strike the right balance. The spiritual alchemy we do when we gratify ourselves by caring about others requires fuel: the Holy Spirit of God's Love. If there is hope for humanity, it resides in people coming to the realization that they need each other. We will not survive unless we raise our understanding of this basic idea: Our only true and lasting power is created when others' trust in us is justified.

It is like unto the Sammy Cahn lyric: "Dad was told by Mother: 'You can't have one, you can't have none, you can't have one without the other.'"

What does all of this have to do with David? Who is David, anyway? All the complicated exploits and ambiguities in David's history are difficult, if not impossible to think of in the context of one single life. He is everyone's daydream of a hero as he defeats Goliath. But David is everyone's nightmare when, on the run from Saul, he works for the Philistines as a mercenary.

He is the glorious king, whose house has been known as God's house for lo these three millennia; but sometimes he is also an unglorious, vainglorious tyrant, whose family relationships are positively sublime in their dysfunction.

Most importantly, David is our voice. The psalms we have been singing lo these three thousand years, Jew and Greek, East and West, Baptist and Papist, songs about our lives, our fears, our love and hatred for one other, our longing and hope for God, are known as "Songs of David." Because these are David's songs that we sing as ours, we get the idea that David is us. The mental health people call it transference. Triumphant, heroic, duplicitous, weak, creative, passionate, sometimes desperate but also hopeful; David is us. David is us, and it is our responsibility to look at his story, contemplate his name, and know what we're singing about, if we can.

So, when Jesus comes along, of the House and Lineage of David, to be born in the City of David, to inherit the Crown of David, we're not exactly talking hidden meanings. In his humanity, Jesus is as much all of us as David was. Yet Jesus' life is not full of confusion and violence done to others; he seems to know his way without all the mistakes. Remember the old song? "I know where I'm going, and I know who's going with me; I know who I love, but the Dear knows whom I'll marry." The Dear, that's God.

In Jesus we have someone who knows where he's going. And because the Dear is both with him and in him, he becomes both David and us, but transformed. God has loved Creation enough to have visited us and been us, feeding with grace however many show up and teaching them to feed each other, walking right on the water if that's what it takes to get our attention. The wideness of God's mercy extends neighbor love even to those who kill his earthly body, so that

whosoever takes the proffered hand and identifies with David in believing with hope, may indeed falter, may even fail spectacularly; they may even die too young, and too, too hungry because of the failures of others or the violence of nature, but they shall not perish; they shall have everlasting life in the Spirit.

The hand is extended; the means of taking it are at our immediate disposal: Pursue interconnectedness – seek *Ubuntu*. Say to one another, “*Si vales, valeo*,” “If you are well, then I am well,” if we would live.

The Prayers of the People

O God of heaven and earth, through Jesus Christ you promise to hear us when we pray to you in faith with thanksgiving, and so we pray for one another, for our families and friends. Thank you for all who care for us. Give us grace to serve Christ by serving our families, our neighbours and our communities; by loving others even as we are loved.

(Silence)

We thank you for the unfailing love you hold out to everyone in Jesus Christ. Comfort those in sorrow, need, sickness or any other trouble, especially Red, Katharine, Karen, are there others? (Silence) Bring healing and peace to all those we hold in our hearts this day. Give them courage and hope in their distress, and bless those who care for them.

(Silence)

We remember with gratitude the bounty of your creation in the natural world and the richness of this land. Help us and people everywhere to share with justice and peace the resources of the earth. Give to those in authority among us and to all leaders of the nations more wisdom, integrity, vision and compassion May their purposes and policies be only and always in the holy name of a healthy and equitable world.

(Silence)

We remember especially this day the truths of our nation’s past. We open our hearts to examine, listen and understand the terrible trauma caused by

human slavery and genocide in our past and pledge our strength in seeking to end the ongoing tragedies, injustices and falsehoods that keep our society so painfully and violently divided. (Silence)

We remember with thanksgiving all who have died in Christ, especially all victims of the Covid pandemic, all victims of gunfire in our land, and those we hold in our hearts, especially... (Silence) We rejoice at the faithful witness of your saints in every age, praying that we may enter with them into the unending joy of your heavenly kingdom. *Amen.*

Hymn 616 – Hail to the Lord’s Anointed VV 1, 2, 3 & 5

Hail to the Lord's anointed, great David's greater son!
Hail, in the time appointed, his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free;
To take away transgression, and rule in equity.

He comes with succor speedy to those who suffer wrong,
To help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying, were precious in his sight.

He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth,
And love, joy, hope, like flowers, spring in his path to birth;
Before him on the mountains shall peace, the herald, to;
And righteousness in fountains from hill to valley flow.

O'er every foe victorious, he on his throne shall rest,
From age to age more glorious, all blessing and all blest;
The tide of time shall never his covenant remove;
His name shall stand for ever, his changeless name of Love.