

The Sunday Missive – June 28, 2020



The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Greetings, One and All, and welcome back to St. Peter's by the Sea, here in beautiful Morro Bay. Today, my friends Marti Lindholm, Nancy Castle and I offer you a service of prayer, word and song with love. In the coming weeks, we hope to move to a different platform and format, so please watch our website, stpetersmorrobay.org and *The Pebble* for details. This Sunday Missive will be delivered live on Facebook at 11:00 A.M. on Sunday, June 28. Click on the link below, or cut and paste into your browser bar and you should be able to watch our service. If you keep this Missive open too, you will have the hymn lyrics ready to sing. We are experimenting with this process, so please be patient. If you are unable to watch, please let Padre Sid know afterwards and we will try to get you up and running for next time: sssymington@gmail.com or (203) 209-2339. The service will last about 35 minutes, with Marti Lindholm reading and playing music and Nancy Castle reading and directing. If you have a Facebook account, or would like to make one for the purpose of watching, be sure to go to

“St. Peter’s By The Sea, Morro Bay” using that exact spelling. There are a few other pages that are either inactive – and we can’t take them down -- or another group entirely!

https://www.facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay/?ref=aymt_home_page_panel&eid=ARAUeH_DsZ84100oD17S5TKTJa9nPinamVaKKBDjC7zKd1Kvws0elUTfHmPTVaREXk2ty7B1JsL3bJxW

Grace to you and peace, from God our Creator, from Christ our Redeemer, who with the Holy Spirit sanctifies and nourishes us.

Let us pray: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts with the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may more perfectly love, and more worthily magnify your holy Name. Amen.

Hymn 525

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=1LZVz1guz2c>

A Reading from The Book of Genesis – Ch. 22 The Testing of Abraham

God spoke to Abraham saying, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.”

So, Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.” Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together. When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me. Because you have done this, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.” **Here ends the reading.**

Psalm 132

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me **forever*** How long will you hide your face from **me**?

How long must I bear grief in my **soul*** have sorrow in my heart all the day **long**?

How long shall my enemy prevail over **me*** Give light to my eyes, Lord my **God!**

Lest my enemy say, "I have overcome **him**"* Lest my foes rejoice when they see me **fall**.

As for me, I trust in your merciful **love*** Let my heart rejoice in your **salvation**.

I will sing to the Lord who has been bountiful with **me*** I will sing Psalms of the Lord Most **High**.

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew -- Chapter 10

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones as a disciple—truly I tell you, will never lose their reward." **This is the Gospel of The Lord.**

Love for one's immediate family – as we know -- is a biological, anthropological and historical imperative. It is a fundamental dimension of the struggle for survival. The family that stays together is more likely to be the family that keeps it together. Allegiance, obedience and love for Jesus (who is described as love itself), on the other hand is a spiritual, metaphysical and voluntary development. Even as children, we instinctively defend our family against all threats, unless some trauma has broken the family bond. But our appetite for mystical contemplation, our interest in contemplating the wonders of Creation, human thought and imagination, grows over time.

Reading away at a massive biography of Albert Einstein someone thoughtfully left in our book exchange, one learns how his appreciation of music, especially Mozart reflected his feel for the harmonies of the universe. "Music, Nature and God became intermingled in him in a complex of feeling, a moral unity.... He never lost his sense of wonder at the magic of Nature's phenomena that grownups find so commonplace: magnetic fields, gravity,

inertia, acceleration, light beams. 'People like you and me never grow old;' he wrote a friend late in life, 'we never cease to stand like children before the great mystery into which we were born.'"

For those of us who listen to stories about the life and ministry; the death and resurrection of Jesus, this is one way we tune in to K-GOD. And as we get older, the comfort we get from taking our deepest concerns and finest joys to the Lord in prayer and meditation, in gratitude and humility only deepens. As time goes on, where once we saw the prospect of faith as an activity subordinate to family life, slowly we begin to see our families through the lens of our faith. This might sound like that Fifth Commandment, "Honor thy Father and thy Mother," had been vacated. But since Jesus claims not to have come to abolish the law but to fulfill it, we have to contemplate this shift a bit more to know how God works.

This movement -- from being part of a family who follows The Way to being a follower of The Way who's part of a family -- is one of the greatest gifts of God in Christ. With this change comes our ability to part from one another and from this life in peace. Death no longer has dominion over us because our families are continuous over time; those who have died are not absent but transformed. Those who are yet to come are already here in the stories that will one day be theirs to tell. With this change comes the certain knowledge that our own dying will never be only a tragedy; always at least in part, a transformation.

One of the beautiful parts of our language is the way we compound words -- words like compound, for example -- taking elements from older words and putting them together to make new ones. These new words express ideas; they help us articulate the complexities of the human existence; they allow us to (verbally speaking) 'boldly go where nobody has gone before.' That Shakespeare was Shakespeare -- which is to say a groundbreaking genius -- is due in no small part to the thousands of words he invented for his characters to speak. If a word did not exist for what he wanted to express, he made one up. Another example is the King James Bible, whose enormous and lasting impact comes to a great degree from the richness of the language it employs. Compound words are articulated metaphors. If you are making a healing mixture of medicinal powders, or combining spices for a special dish, you put them in a mortar and pound away with your pestle until they are thoroughly blended. You com-pound them; you together-pound them.

Thus is the case with Jesus' announcement that he has come to fulfill the law. He doesn't say he's going to carry it out, or enforce it. Fulfill implies

carrying out to maximum degree; it means that whatever law there is, whatever righteousness is possible for humankind to attain, whatever potential there is for the human race to flourish, Jesus has come to identify that ideal for us. And he will not only identify the frontiers of spiritual possibility; he promises to encourage and empower us to direct and move our lives in their direction.

That's why it's not called fillment, but fulfillment. And it's fulfillment that requires radical behavior; that is, behavior that gets to the root of things. So, as for that Fifth Commandment, of course honoring one's family connections and allegiances and obligations is important. Two thousand years later, we still need each other. The state of our family love still profoundly effects our ability to form relationships and make commitments, our value to the communities we live in and our inner peace. But if our families make demands on us or inflict wounds on us that turn us from paths of love and peacefulness, they can turn us into part of the problem; bad eggs; toxic avengers. This is why following Jesus is the greater priority.

"Whoever does not take up the cross is not worthy of me." In fulfilling the law, Jesus' great act was to put others' flourishing ahead of his own, by choice. This is the cross: to look at life as a boundless field of opportunity for selfless love. Certainly it's possible that in setting such a priority, one's own physical life will be cut short, by violence or otherwise – God knows that has happened all too often – nobody is being asked to make that a goal. When Jesus says willingness to lose one's life is central to the enterprise, he means that if that's what it takes, then that's what we'll do; if we have to do with less to allow another to live, we can be willing to do that. This is the life-losing Jesus is calling us to; this is the voice of God. Will it involve some hardship on occasion? Certainly.

The story of Abraham and Isaac surely represents more than a legend about the time the Israelites quit doing human sacrifices. No, this story, however it came about in the first place is useful to us now as an allegory, a parable. Historically, it is nonsensical, at best. Isaac wasn't Abraham's only son. In Islam, it is Ishmael, the son of the slave Hagar, who is taken up the mountain. It is his life that matters. Thus, neither is this a story about the origins of Judeo-Christian chosenness. It is a story about humanity's obligation to the Creator. Abraham is willing to forfeit his worldly life – surely our children are that to us – if doing so is what God requires. But God requires no such thing. Instead, the call upon us is to be just and humble and merciful, especially to those over whom we have power and control. The angel promises "offspring numerous as the stars," as the consequence

of Abraham's cooperation. We live in the belief that every selfless act of ours will resonate to eternity. We are called to be prophets, not profiteers.

Jesus is also talking about losing in the sense of not finding. Because if what we prioritize above all is finding our life, finding our bliss, so to speak, ful-filling ourselves personally, then whatever it is we accomplish will most likely end at the moment of our death. But if what we do is oriented towards the development of others, towards conservation of the planet and peace among the peoples, there is a far more permanent satisfaction in the offering. Perhaps the life-losing is as simple a thing as setting aside my priorities, my preferences, my agenda on a given occasion and saying, "I want whatever you want today my love," and meaning it!

Let us pray together,

In union, O Lord with the faithful of your Church around the World, wherever the Holy Eucharist is being celebrated, we offer you our praise and thanksgiving. We present to you our hearts and minds in the earnest desire that we may always be united with you and one another in love. And although we cannot share the physical sacrament of bread and wine, we beseech you to cast your Spirit upon us and fill us with the desire to sanctify ourselves by serving your Creation. Let nothing separate us from this living water; may we live in you and you in us, now and forever. Amen.

Be with us, Divine One, in this time of anxiety, comfort those who are ill, especially with the corona virus, soothe all of us who are lonely, fearful, desperate and angry. Strengthen and protect, O God, the medical caregivers, teach forbearance and compassion to all who are sworn to keep peace in our communities; imbue our leaders with more wisdom, more compassion and more honesty, that their decisions may always be – as Jesus taught -- to the benefit of the least fortunate and most vulnerable among us, no matter where we were born, no matter what faith we follow, no matter the color our skin.

Instill us all with your Spirit to do what is best in each moment, even if it means more waiting. Renew our hope for a world — with less anxiety and more joy, With less "me first," and more "please, after you!" With less fear and more love. With less fear and more love. Guard us in our hearts and homes, and when we can safely return to our gatherings, let them always be in the name of peace, good fellowship and loving service. Amen.

Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee; e'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me; still all my song would be: Nearer, my God, to thee.
Nearer my God, to thee, Nearer to thee.

Though like the wanderer, the sun goes down; darkness be over me,
My rest a stone; Yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my God, to thee.
Nearer my God, to thee, Nearer to thee.

And, in my waking thoughts, bright with thy praise, out of my stony griefs,
Bethel I'll raise. So by my woes to be nearer, my God, to thee.
Nearer my God, to thee, Nearer to thee.

Or if on joyful wing, cleaving the sky, sun, moon and stars forgot,
Upwards I fly, still all my song shall be nearer, my God, to thee.
Nearer my God, to thee, Nearer to thee.

The Johann Strauss Orchestra in Amsterdam

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1mQT1u_45I

Sam Cooke and The Soul Stirrers in the USA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXt-I2bIdZE>

Now, let us depart, even as we remain connected, walking only in the
eternal ways of love. **Thanks be to God, Alleluia, Alleluia!**

Come to Chautauqua... from wherever you are! Opening Three Taps of the Gavel and Sunday Morning Worship

The Chautauqua Institution's 2020 Summer Assembly begins with the traditional welcome by President Michael E. Hill followed by Sunday Morning Worship with the Rt. Rev. Bishop V. Gene Robinson and the chaplain of the week, the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas. Robert A. Jonas will be a guest soloist, playing a shakuhachi, the traditional Japanese and ancient Chinese bamboo-flute. <https://assembly.chq.org/>

Sunday, June 28, 10:45 A. M.