

The Sunday Missive – June 2, 2024

The Second Sunday after Pentecost

Hymn 440 Blessed Jesus at Thy Word

Blessed Jesus, at thy word we are gathered all to hear thee;
Let our hearts and souls be stirred now to seek and love and fear thee;
By thy teachings pure and holy, drawn from earth to love thee solely.

All our knowledge, sense, and sight lie in deepest darkness shrouded,
Till thy Spirit breaks our night with the beams of truth unclouded;
Thou alone to God canst win us; thou must work all good within us.

Gracious Lord, thyself impart! Light of Light, from God proceeding,
Open thou our ears and heart, help us by thy Spirit's pleading.
Hear the cry thy Church upraises; hear, and bless our prayers and
praises.

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

The Collect of the Day

O God, your never-failing providence sets in order all things both in heaven and earth: Put away from us, we entreat you, all hurtful things, and give us those things which are profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

1 Samuel 3:1-10(11-20)

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he

said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." [Then the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."]

Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."

As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.]

Psalm 81

Ring out your joy to God our strength* *Shout in triumph to the God of Jacob.*

Raise a song and sound the timbrel* ***The sweet-sounding harp and the lute;***

Blow the trumpet at the new moon* ***And when the moon is full, on our feast.***

For this is a statute in Israel* ***A command of the God of Jacob.***

Who made it a decree for Joseph* ***When he went out from the land of Egypt.***

A voice I did not know said to me: "I freed your shoulder from the burden* ***Your hands were freed from their load.***

You called in distress and I saved you* ***I answered, concealed in the thunder;***

Listen, my people, as I warn you* ***O Israel, if only you would heed!***

Let there be no strange gods among you* ***Nor shall you worship a alien god.***

I am the Lord your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt* ***Open wide your mouth, and I will fill it.***

But my people did not heed my voice* ***And Israel would not obey me.***

So I left them in their stubbornness of heart* ***To follow their own violent designs.***

O that my people would heed me* ***That Israel would walk in my ways!***

At once I would subdue their foes* ***And turn my hand against their enemies.***

And Israel I would feed with finest wheat* ***And fill with honey from the rock.***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llSnuCLef08>

2 Corinthians 4:5-12

We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Hymn 773 Heal Me, Hands of Jesus

Heal me, hands of Jesus, and search out all my pain:
Restore my hope, remove my fear and bring me peace again.

Cleanse me, blood of Jesus, take bitterness away;
Let me forgive as one forgiven and bring me peace today.

Know me, mind of Jesus, and show me all my sin;
Dispel the memories of guilt, and bring me peace within.

Fill me, joy of Jesus: anxiety shall cease
And heaven's serenity be mine, for Jesus brings me peace!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REJMko4m-Tg>

Mark 2:23-3:6

One sabbath Jesus and his disciples were going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing

what is not lawful on the sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Give Them Rest – Proper 4B

It's right there in the Ten Commandments. Number Three in fact, only behind I am the One and Only God You'll Ever Need and Don't Kid Yourself that You Can Enlist My Help in Doing Crummy Things. The admonition to keep the Sabbath holy must be

- A. Awfully important and
- B. Something we have a tendency to forget.

So, what is Jesus doing, allowing his people to gather grain on the Sabbath, and himself healing the afflicted on God's special day?

The Right Reverend Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows is, since 2017 Diocesan Bishop of Indianapolis, and the first African-American woman to be a bishop anywhere. The story of her grandmothers Annie Lee Moore Baskerville and Mary Weaver makes her our guest preacher today. She writes:

“Annie Lee Moore Baskerville worked in housecleaning at King’s County Hospital in Brooklyn. She would inspect the floors and wore clogs before anyone else did. She kept those buildings gleaming from top to bottom; she was loved and feared, cursed like a sailor and was not someone to mess with. When she came to Brooklyn from the South, she married Harry Baskerville, a Shinnecock Indian. She had a soft spot for her grandchildren and would lavish us with praise and help us in any way she could.

“My other grandmother, Mary Weaver grew up in Asheville and Black Mountain, North Carolina. She worked as a domestic on the Biltmore Estate, the biggest house in America. Her husband Joe was a cook there before they moved to Staten Island together. She would always show up at any apartment I had rented with her bucket and cleaning supplies because, as she said, the places were never cleaned ‘her way.’

“When I was in college in Western Massachusetts and feeling stressed, both my grandmothers would tell me to go take a walk – or a run. They would say, ‘You are in that beautiful place, just go for a run!’ They would tell me to do the self-care they were never allowed themselves. Both of them faced far more stress than I ever did. ‘Jesus knows that rest and renewal should be for everyone,’ they taught, ‘Black women have had to do what we had to do before now, but you can take the time to take care of yourself.’

“Jesus was always trying to get away from the crowd. He seldom got a break to lay down his head and rest either. While he appreciated the spirit behind God’s Sabbath rules, he used the good sense God gave him. It was a no-brainer to break the Sabbath rules when they were walking through a ripe field and hungry. Likewise, to heal the man with the withered hand. The whole point of Sabbath is to rest, eat and heal. That’s why he said the Sabbath is made for humankind, not the other way around.

“The experience was not bad planning on Jesus’ part, or even just common sense. It was about agency and authority. We here are well aware of the privilege of our rest. Yet the Sabbath is also necessary for

the renewal of Creation. As Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has put it, times of rest are necessary for all in order to have a 'loving, living relationship with God.' Sadly, not everyone gets a say about when and how they rest. That was true in Jesus' time, and it's still true today. Good news has to be good news for everybody. If the poor obtain the liberation to rest when they need it, only then is it good news."

In Chicago, the Nap Ministry was founded in 2016 by Tricia Hersey and is an organization that examines the liberating power of naps. Though it may sound strange, our "Rest is Resistance" framework and practice engages with the power of performance art, site-specific installations, and community organizing to install sacred and safe spaces where the community can rest. We facilitate immersive workshops and curate performance art that examines rest as a radical tool for community healing. We believe rest is a form of resistance and we name sleep deprivation as a racial and social justice issue. The foundational idea is that everyone deserves a break from our burnout culture. "How will you be useless to capitalism today?" is one of their slogans that urges people to push back at the aspects of a system that systemically treats people as machines or problems to be solved.

Rabbi Sharon Brous points out a Rabbinic text from the ninth century declaring that every person is accompanied, at all times, by a procession of angels crying out, "Make way, for an image of the Holy One is approaching!" Every person, like royalty. And yet, again and again, the image of the Holy One is controlled and contained, humiliated and degraded, incarcerated, incapacitated or worse before our very eyes. How do we keep missing all those angels, with their trumpets and proclamations, desperate to rouse us to the dignity of every human being?

Bishop Baskerville-Burrows concludes: "The God who rests tells us not to apologize for our own sabbath healing, but instead to pause and rest our bodies to heal the world. The poor and the vulnerable cannot be sacrificed on the altar of survival and opportunity. We who can rejoice in the gift of Sabbath, whatever we return to, we must use our rest and restoration to care, not just for ourselves, but also for

those can't or won't rest themselves. May we who have the blessing of renewal also employ our agency in claiming the Sabbath that is made for us on the terms God has given us: Holy rest from the grind for all, every single, last one."

What would it mean to build a society in which every person is treated as an image of the Divine? How would this affect our relationships with our neighbors, our coworkers, the stranger lying beneath the stained blankets and trash outside Starbucks? Wouldn't it compel us to recast the cultures of our schools, organizations, and faith communities? How would it impact health care, education, public policy?... How would it transform law enforcement and criminal justice systems—where today judgment is too often rendered based on whether a person is Black or white, rich or poor, rather than guilty or innocent?

Rabbi Brous shares a story about nearness and neighborliness: "My friend goes to a church of Caribbean immigrants in downtown Los Angeles. One day his pastor preached: Say you're walking in downtown LA, or Chicago, or New York. A naked man runs in front of you on the sidewalk, screaming and cursing. What do you do? Most of us, of course, briskly cross the street. *'That guy's unwell,'* we think.

But say we lived in a tiny town of maybe fifty households. We're walking around one day when a naked man runs in front of us on the sidewalk, screaming and cursing. And because we live in a tiny town, we know this man ... it's Henry. Last week, we know there was a terrible tragedy and Henry's house burned to the ground, leaving him with nothing. What might we do? "Henry, come with me, my friend. You need a hot meal and a safe place to rest."

Just imagine if our mindset could be transformed from seeing a crazy man to seeing Henry, one of us, made in the image of the Lord. Imagine a completely different reality from ever before; that is what Jesus is leading us to. It is a reality wherein other people are equally visible to us, regardless of their circumstances, and equally deserving of our compassion and respect because we are connected parts of one

whole. This is the most difficult and most sacred work we can do: not cross those streets.

Anything else is indeed rebellion against God and false witness against our neighbour, the very things that God laments in today's psalm: "Oh that my people would heed me; that Israel would walk in my ways!" But their hard-heartedness and refusal to heed the Word of God is often ours too. Like them, we tend to be stubborn and tight-fisted, keeping God's blessings as much as we can for ourselves.

If only we could relax and relent, release our tight grip on fears and defences and entitlements, God's abundance would mean plenty for all. As Karl Rahner put it, "Our greatest heresy surely must be that God's grace is scarce."

There is enough to go around and more; enough grain and healing to allow us to live in peace, and enough time for all to take their Sabbath rest. And dance together too. After all, even the great nihilist Friedrich Nietzsche famously said, "I should only believe in a God who knew how to dance."

Hymn 530 Spread, O spread Thy mighty word Vv. 1, 3 & 5

Spread, O spread, thou mighty word, spread the kingdom of the Lord,
That to earth's remotest bound all may heed the joyful sound:

Word of how the Savior's love earth's sore burden doth remove;
How forever, in its need, through his death the world is freed;

Word of life, most pure and strong, word for which the nations long,
Spread abroad, until from night all the world awakes to light.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiBKY6DfGuw>

A Journey

When he got up that morning everything was different:
He enjoyed the bright spring day
But he did not realize it exactly, he just enjoyed it.

And walking down the street to the railroad station
Past magnolia trees with dying flowers like old socks
It was a long time since he had breathed so simply.

Tears filled his eyes and it felt good
But he held them back
Because men didn't walk around crying in that town.

Waiting on the platform at the station
The fear came over him of something terrible about to happen:
The train was late and he recited the alphabet to keep hold.

And in its time it came screeching in
And as it went on making its usual stops,
People coming and going, telephone poles passing,

He hid his head behind a newspaper
No longer able to hold back the sobs, and willed his eyes
To follow the rational weavings of the seat fabric.

He didn't do anything violent as he had imagined.
He cried for a long time, but when he finally quieted down
A place in him that had been closed like a fist was open.

And at the end of the ride he stood up and got off that train:
And through the streets and in all the places he lived in later on
He walked, himself at last, a man among men,
With such radiance that everyone looked up and wondered.

Edward Field