

The Sunday Missive – September 11, 2022
The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Hymn 423 Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, thy great Name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish, like leaves on the tree,
Then wither and perish; but nought changeth thee.

Thou reignest in glory, thou rulest in light,
Thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
All laud we would render: O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth thee.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLMZ09NFuMQ>

The Collect of the Day

O God, because without you we are not able to please you,
mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and
rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and
reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and
forever. *Amen.*

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: A hot
wind comes from me out of the bare heights in the desert toward
my poor people, not to winnow or cleanse-- a wind too strong for
that. Now it is I who speak in judgment against them.

"For my people are foolish,
they do not know me;
they are stupid children,
they have no understanding.
They are skilled in doing evil,
but do not know how to do good."
I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light.
I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking,
and all the hills moved to and fro.
I looked, and lo, there was no one at all,
and all the birds of the air had fled.
I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert,
and all its cities were laid in ruins
before the LORD, before his fierce anger.

For thus says the LORD: The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I
will not make a full end.

Because of this the earth shall mourn,
and the heavens above grow black;
for I have spoken, I have purposed;
I have not relented nor will I turn back.

Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness* ***In your great compassion blot out my offenses.***

Wash me through and through from my wickedness* ***And cleanse me from my sin.***

For I know my transgressions* ***And my sin is ever before me.***

Against you only have I sinned* ***And done what is evil in your sight.***

And so you are justified when you speak* ***And upright in your judgment.***

For behold, you look for truth deep within me* ***And will make me understand wisdom secretly.***

Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure* ***Wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.***

Make me hear of joy and gladness* ***So the body that is broken may rejoice.***

Hide your face from my sins* ***And blot out all my iniquities.***

Create in me a clean heart, O God* ***And renew a right spirit within me.***

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbGrq_QaEg4

1 Timothy 1:12-17

I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the foremost. But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn 645 The King of Love my shepherd is

The King of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his, and he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow, my ransomed soul he leadeth,
And where the verdant pastures grow, with food celestial feedeth.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight; thy unction grace bestoweth;
And oh, what transport of delight from thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise within thy house for ever.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0TGpDE2FJo>

Luke 15:1-10

All the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

"Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

A Tough Job for Anybody – Proper 19C

The prophet Jeremiah was active at a critical time in the history of the Kingdom of Judah. With the conquest of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians still recent history, Jeremiah's people were well aware that a similar fate could be theirs. He has been depicted over the years as a stately, pensive and wise fellow with a long white beard. If we think of the typical image of God's very self: flowing robes, flowing beard, big head of curly white hair, we'll be close to the idea of Jeremiah too. All we have to do is replace the fiercely powerful look on God's face with one of deep contemplation and/or sorrow over the fate of his people, and we have our prophet. Rabbi [Abraham Joshua Heschel](#) comments that the book is written as if Jeremiah not only heard as words but personally felt in his body and emotions the experiences of what he prophesied: "Are not all my words as fire, says the Lord, and a hammer that shatters rock?" Through Jeremiah, we receive God's personal testimony about what it's like to have us for kids.

He had insistently warned his people to mend their ways before it was too late, but their response to Jeremiah was mostly outrage, rejection, persecution and torture. The men of Anathoth attempted to take Jeremiah's life. When he complains, the Lord lets him know the attacks on him will only get worse.

[Pashur](#), a temple official, had Jeremiah beaten and put in the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin for a day. Finally, King Zedekiah's officials put Jeremiah down into a [cistern](#), where he sank into the mud and would have starved to death, had not a Cushite pulled him out. Jeremiah remained imprisoned until Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 587BCE. His witness continues in his book of Lamentations, written after the conquest. Ironically, once the Babylonians were in charge, Jeremiah was treated well and is said to have died peacefully, though still unhappy with his people.

And what was the nature of Jeremiah's criticism? We heard it today in his words, and elsewhere in those of the Psalmist:

“For my people are foolish, they do not know me,” (says Jeremiah in Chapter 4, speaking for God) “A fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God,’” echoes psalm 14.

“They are stupid children, who have no understanding.” Jeremiah

“The Lord looks down to see if there are any who are wise, but they have all gone astray.” Psalms 14 and 53

“They are skilled in doing evil, but do not know how to do good.”

“They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good.”

We see a bit of a common theme here... it boils down to this: Instead of looking for a relationship and alliance with goodness in the universe, the people have continuously turned to worldly power and wealth, while abusing the poor and vulnerable and neglecting their welfare. “Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread?” It is clear that modern societies are not the first to ignore the precepts of God. But on this 21st anniversary of the horrors of 9/11 and their aftermath, we would do well to acknowledge that the problem has attained truly global proportions.

In an earlier chapter, Jeremiah remembers their history when, full of faith, the people had followed Moses into the desert, portraying Israel's earlier affinity for God as that of a new bride for her betrothed. He wonders what has happened to them to make them betray this bond. He warns that Israel's ingratitude and unfaithfulness presages her doom: “Thus says the Lord: ‘I remember for you the affection of your youth, the love of your espousal; how you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.’” But now, “Besiegers come from a distant land; they shout against the cities of Judah. They have closed in around her like watchers of a field, all because she has rebelled against the Lord.”

The message of Jeremiah is clear: “You once were found, but now are lost; could see, but now are blind.”

Of the futility of trusting in man instead of in God, he declares: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, whose heart

departs from the Lord. For he shall be like a tamarisk in the desert, (an extremely dry and scraggly tree) and blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, that spreads out its roots by the river, and its foliage shall be luxuriant.' O Lord, the hope of Israel! All that forsake the fountain of living water shall be ashamed. Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved."

Healing, then is the goal of this prophecy, the closing up of a deep wound, the return home of spiritual wanderers, whose absence brings about confusion, twisted values and grief. Likewise, when Jesus tells his stories about the Kingdom of God, he is describing this home, this wholeness, this healed self. Today's parables portray the great longing God has for reconciliation among humankind, and the extravagant lengths God will go to bring about healing of the human family. It sounds crazy to leave 99 sheep vulnerable while looking for one lost one. It seems unnecessary, maybe even obsessional to waste time and precious lamp oil searching for a small coin. But God's crazy obsession is to heal the family, to open up a safe house and home where all will be fed, none will go thirsty or lost; where self-serving and hypocrisy will cease, peace will prevail and all may walk in favor.

For many of us, participation in such a spiritual society and family requires change. The kind of self-examination and self-awareness that makes for a safe and peaceful home does not come naturally. If we are among the comfortable, we tend to want to preserve that comfort, even in the face of evidence that the whole is in trouble, and despite warnings about the future. But change we must, or we will once again be lost. What Jeremiah tells his people, and what Jesus is both describing and embodying for us is a spiritual economy where, no matter what happens in the marketplaces and amongst the evildoers of the world, we will always have safety in God's Kingdom if we seek it.

The wacky and colorful experience of a 3D movie is perhaps not something any of us wants to have every day. You have to wear those silly glasses, and things look weird. But unless you wear the glasses, you can't see the movie. Today, as much or more than ever, it is only by looking at life through Kingdom glasses, 4D you might call 'em, or YahwehSpex, it's only through these that we can hope to stay whole and see what's coming at us with any kind of peace. It is only by

considering what our thoughts and words and actions look like to a loving and universal benevolence that we have the hope of making healthy decisions. As the great Sanskrit proverb has it:

Look to this day, for it is life, The very life of life.

In its brief course lie all the realities and verities of existence:

The bliss of growth, the splendor of action, the glory of power.

For yesterday is but a dream, and tomorrow only a vision.

But today, well-lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness

And every tomorrow, a dream of hope.

Look well therefore to this day.

Without such an attitude and orientation, our energies and plans and resources will all be squandered in recreating dead dreams and preserving unhealthy institutions and ways of doing things. But with the grace of God's goodness flowing through our veins, no matter what challenges we face we can meet them with imagination, extravagant selflessness and new purpose.

Hymn 671 Amazing grace

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace first taught my heart to fear
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first begun.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKQULTTnaI8>

Serenity

Brook,
Be still,—be still!
Midnight's arch is broken
In thy ceaseless ripples.
Dark and cold below them
Runs the troubled water,—
Only on its bosom,
Shimmering and trembling,
Doth the glinted star-shine
Sparkle and cease.

Life,
Be still,—be still!
Boundless truth is shattered
On thy hurrying current.
Rest, with face uplifted,
Calm, serenely quiet;
Drink the deathless beauty—
Thrills of love and wonder
Sinking, shining, star-like;
Till the mirrored heaven
Hollow down within thee
Holy deeps unfathomed,
Where far thoughts go floating,
And low voices wander
Whispering peace.

Edward Rowland Sill