

The Sunday Missive – October 2, 2022

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Hymn 10 New every morning is the love

New every morning is the love our wakening and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life and power and thought.

New mercies, each returning day, around us hover while we pray;
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

If on our daily course our mind be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price, God will provide for sacrifice.

Only, O Lord, in thy dear love, fit us for perfect rest above;
And help us, this and every day, to live more nearly as we pray.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dm1vJp7WgI>

The Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw: O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrong-doing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me;

strife and contention arise. So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous -- therefore judgment comes forth perverted. I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint.

Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

Psalm 37

Do not fret yourself because of evildoers* ***Do not be jealous of those who do wrong.***

For they shall soon wither like the grass* ***And like the green grass fade away.***

Put your trust in the Lord and do good* ***Dwell in the land and feed on its riches.***

Take delight in the Lord* ***Who shall give you your heart's desire.***

Commit your way to the Lord and put your trust in God* ***And God will bring it to pass.***

He will make your righteousness as clear as the light* ***And your just dealing as the noonday.***

Be still before the Lord* ***And wait patiently for God.***

Do not fret yourself over the one who prospers* ***The one who succeeds in evil schemes.***

Refrain from anger, leave rage alone* ***Do not fret yourself; it leads only to evil.***

For evildoers shall be cut off* ***But those who wait upon the Lord shall possess the land.***

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am grateful to God-- whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did-- when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. Hold to the

standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

LEVAS Hymn 64 I love to tell the story

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.
I love to tell the story, because I know it's true;
It satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.

I love to tell the story; twill be my theme in glory.
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it, like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
'Twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrCpKa_x0cE

Luke 17:1-6

Jesus said to his disciples, "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive." The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

Something Essential -- Proper 22C

Not long ago, I saw a documentary about the Brazilian artist Vik Muniz and his portrait project among the subculture of trash pickers in Rio de Janeiro's vast central landfill. Muniz is best known for repurposing everyday materials for intricate and heavily layered artworks. He works in a range of media, from trash to (in a portrait of Andy Warhol) peanut butter and jelly. And his portraits reveal their subjects' personalities in an uncannily powerful and beautiful way. Having come from a place of severe poverty and desolation, the now-successful Muniz observes, "If I had to choose one or the other, I would rather want everything and have nothing than have everything and want nothing. At least when you want something, your life has meaning; it's worthwhile. From the moment you think you have everything, it's a constant search for meaning in other things."

When we listen to the Bible, we often hear the stories of and prophetic commentary about attachment to things, stuff: worldly wealth. For Jesus himself, this is a central theme. Sermons on the subject abound, in both the Old and New Testaments; we got a taste of one today, from the mysterious 7th Century BC prophet Habbakuk, a powerful ideological and rhetorical ancestor of Jesus, part of a long line of prophets protesting injustice and violence. It might behoove us to listen to a larger part of Habbakuk's sermon, with its vivid imagery and timeless accuracy:

The Book of the prophet Habakkuk, Chapter 2

I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what God will say to me, and what God will answer concerning my complaint. Then the Lord answered me and said: "Wealth is treacherous; the arrogant do not endure. They open their throats as wide as Sheol; like Death they never have enough. They gather all nations for themselves, and collect all peoples as their own. Shall not everyone taunt such

people and, with mocking riddles, say about them, 'Alas for you who heap up what is not your own! How long will you load yourselves with goods taken in pledge? Will not your own creditors suddenly rise, and those who make you tremble wake up? Then you will be booty for them. Because you have plundered many nations, all that survive of the peoples shall plunder you—because of human bloodshed, and violence to the earth, to cities and all who live in them. Alas for you who get evil gain for your houses, setting your nest on high to be safe from the reach of harm! You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life. The very stones will cry out from the wall, and the plaster will respond from the woodwork. Alas for you who build a town by bloodshed, and found a city on iniquity! Is it not against the Lord of hosts that peoples labor only to feed the flames that consume them, and do not the nations weary themselves for nothing? But the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'"

Now that is some powerful preaching. It is a message of warning for the overly rich and of hope for the desperate poor. In a world where justice and peace are all-too greatly lacking, God promises they will ultimately prevail. Most of us (to return to the artist Muniz for a moment), most of us don't have or want either everything or nothing. We both have and want – most of us here have plenty – we're neither wealthy, nor are we poor. And we are not against the making of money. It's not the making of money, the collecting of resources, the building of nest eggs, but the way it's made, collected and built, and the uses to which it's put that matter. And the concept of enough.

Our Psalm picks up on the theme of wanting and having too -- in a very tricky way. If we put our faith in God, we will attain our heart's every desire. What they don't tell you, of course, is that once I put my faith in God, that itself becomes my heart's desire. When faith fills me, then I am full-filled *ad infinitum*. I am compelled by a power greater than any I have known to admit – and also bear witness to – God's holding up her end of the bargain.

When in weakness, I cry out to God, the gracious touch brings healing, the renewal of courage and the power to meet every situation. God makes me a better offer than any other. I think they call that argument *a fortiori*, but Latin class was a long time ago. Is there a lawyer in the house?

Furthermore, according to Luke's account, I will also be able to uproot mulberry trees and transplant them into the sea with just a word, although there is no explanation of why anyone would ever want to do such a thing. We will be fulfilled, and *ergo* made powerful. Our hearts desire will also be our calling. As Paul says in the letter to Timothy, God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power, love and self-discipline. We must guard the good treasure entrusted to us – by means of the Holy Spirit living in us -- even when such a calling leads to hard, seemingly endless work and suffering for the sake of peace and justice.

This can be a scary proposition, full of trepidation and the possibility of failure – failure to get that fulfillment, failure to feel like we have enough; we might get lost in the shuffle, or mown down by the powerful. After all, as the proverb goes, “*Ella que no entrar a nadar, no se ahoga.*” ‘If you don't go swimming, you can't drown.’ So why risk it?

But if we want that old time feeling, the sweet joy of faith in God's grace and the triumph of peace, if we want it enough; by wanting it, we will have it; God will make something of us. We take our satisfaction by revelling in the mere existence of Creation and compassion and affection, and we are, *ipso facto* made strong for the adventures ahead. To paraphrase Spencer Tracy in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*, “In the final analysis, it doesn't matter what anybody thinks. The only thing that matters is what you feel, and how much you feel. And if it's half of what we felt, that's everything.”

The poet Ted Loder offers this prayer:

Let Something Essential Happen to Me

O God, let something essential happen to me, something more than interesting, or entertaining, or thoughtful.

O God, let something essential happen to me, something awesome, something real. Speak to my condition, Lord, and change me somewhere inside where it matters, a change that will burn and tremble and heal and explode me into tears or laughter or love that throbs or screams or keeps a terrible, cleansing silence and dares the dangerous deeds. Let something happen in me which is my real self, God....

O God,
let something essential and joyful happen in me now,
something like the blooming of hope and faith,
like a grateful heart,
like a surge of awareness
of how precious each moment is,
that now, not next time,
now is the occasion
to take off my shoes
to see every bush afire,
to leap and whirl with neighbor,
to gulp the air as sweet wine
until I've drunk enough
to dare to speak the tender word:
"Thank you"
"I love you"
"You're beautiful"
"Let's live forever beginning now"
and "I'm a fool for Christ's sake."

Hymn 11 Awake my soul and with the sun

Awake, my soul, and with the sun thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise to pay thy morning sacrifice.

Lord, I my vows to thee renew; disperse my sins as morning dew.
Guard my first springs of thought and will,
And with thyself my spirit fill.

Direct, control, suggest, this day, all I design, or do, or say;
That all my powers, with all their might, in thy sole glory may unite.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host:
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost.

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

Voyages V

Meticulous, past midnight in clear rime,
Infrangible and lonely, smooth as though cast
Together in one merciless white blade—
The bay estuaries fleck the hard sky limits.

—As if too brittle or too clear to touch!
The cables of our sleep so swiftly filed,
Already hang, shred ends from remembered stars.
One frozen trackless smile... What words
Can strangle this deaf moonlight? For we

Are overtaken. Now no cry, no sword
Can fasten or deflect this tidal wedge,
Slow tyranny of moonlight, moonlight loved
And changed... “There’s

Nothing like this in the world,” you say,
Knowing I cannot touch your hand and look
Too, into that godless cleft of sky
Where nothing turns but dead sands flashing.

“—And never to quite understand!” No,
In all the argosy of your bright hair I dreamed
Nothing so flagless as this piracy. But now

Draw in your head, alone and too tall here.
Your eyes already in the slant of drifting foam;
Your breath sealed by the ghosts I do not know:
Draw in your head and sleep the long way home.

Hart Crane