

The Sunday Missive – October 27, 2024 The Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

Hymn 410 Praise my soul the King of Heaven

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; to his feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, evermore his praises sing:
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.

Praise him for his grace and favor to his people in distress;
Praise him still the same as ever, slow to chide, and swift to bless:
Alleluia, alleluia! Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like he tends and spares us; well our feeble frame he knows;
In his hand he gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia, alleluia! Widely yet his mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore him; ye behold him face to face;
Sun and moon, bow down before him, dwellers all in time and space.
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise with us the God of grace.

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

The Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Job answered the Lord: "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore, I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

And then the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this Job lived for one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. And Job died, old and full of days.

Psalm 34

I will bless the Lord at all times* ***God's praise shall ever be in my mouth.***

I will glory in the Lord* ***Let the humble hear and rejoice.***

Proclaim with me the greatness of the Lord* ***Let us exalt God's Name together.***

I sought the Lord, who answered me* ***Who delivered me out of all my terror.***

Look upon the Lord and be radiant* ***Let not your faces be ashamed.***

When I called in my affliction, the Lord heard me* ***And saved me from all my troubles.***

O Taste and see that the Lord is good* Happy are they who trust in God.

Many are the troubles of the righteous* But the Lord will deliver them, every one.

Hebrews 7:23-28

The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but Jesus holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

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 10:46-52

Jesus and his disciples came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still

and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

A Cosmic Policy -- Proper 27B

The Letter to the Hebrews relates that Jesus went to actual factual heaven and thus God now knows what it's really like being human. What is it really like being human? We have two parts to our lives; two realms. The shorter part we're living here now on earth, among other things having conversations about what it's like being human, what God knows and is up to, etc., and the much longer part afterwards (some say before, too) when we are with God and can know and see for ourselves. Not only know and see, but drink deeply of the nectar of wisdom, and eat our fill of the ambrosia of truth.

We live these the shorter parts of our lives expecting to face those longer ones. So did Jesus. Because God was and is and ever shall be determined to find out what the Sam Hill is wrong with us, for Christ's sake (literally), and to help alleviate whatever pain and fear is causing us to be such violent screw-ups here on earth, starting with the first-born Cain and continuing to this day. God is determined to know us. As the psalmist sang, "O Lord you search me and you know me; you know my resting and my rising, you discern my purpose from afar."

So Jesus became fully human: having a full human life, with those same two parts like us. There was his earthly life to conduct, which was pretty colorful. Think how much work it would be if we were able, and thus obligated to choose and predetermine all of our behaviors on the basis of moral purity. We'd have to be perfect! We'd get so good at it, our thoughts would start to

become pure, as both collects we prayed today would suggest. What a daunting prospect! This is why they say the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: If I'm wise, I'm going to be afraid of considering myself quite so highly and claiming perfection. Instead, I ought to let my work be to try and identify some of my own sins -- well-knowing that I will never get finished with the job -- and leave the ruling to the Almighty.

The other part of Jesus' life, the longer one, was described by John the Divine: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And it was described by John the Revelator: "I am the Alpha and the Omega--the beginning and the end," says the Lord God; "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come."

Don't forget Jesus was on a dual mission: find out the above info -- what the Sam Hill is wrong with us, etc., and also to convince us that we are worthy enough -- by virtue of our need -- to warrant a personal visit, a mile in our shoes (a mile and-a-half in our shoes) by God. Our need for awareness of God is far, far greater than that of anything else in creation. Listen to the psalmist: "Praise ye sun and moon: all ye stars of light, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens, ye dragons, and all deeps, fire, and hail, snow, and vapour, stormy wind all fulfilling God's word. God 'stablished you for ever and ever and hath made a decree which shall not pass." None of them needs a catechism or school curriculum. But we humans, with every reason to get along with one another, continually behave to an astonishing degree as if humility were just an option, as if conservation of the planet and her resources were just a suggestion, as if compassion were just a recommended choice and God an interesting idea. The whales and the fishes don't judge one another, and they don't have to judge themselves; they come biologically pure of thought. But we don't have that simplicity. We come prone to suspicion about others, shame about ourselves and skepticism about our relative unimportance in the cosmos.

As the swami Inayat Khan observes, “We human beings are limited in thought, speech, and action. We’re naturally liable to folly and error. Our progress through life can only be made the way little child learns to walk, falling a thousand times before it can stand. We are no more than children before God. If we remember to take this attitude in life -- not assuming that because yesterday we failed, today we are doomed to fail, but always hoping that some day we shall walk upright -- that hour will come. Imagine if a child thought that because she had fallen so often, perhaps she would never walk! Instead there is a natural hope, ‘Next time I shall!’ Our follies, shortcomings and errors are natural, but when we defend ourselves, hide our errors from others and justifying our shortcomings, it is then we nurture and perpetuate those follies. Our sense of justice can never be developed while we are judging others. The only way of developing it is to assess ourselves continually instead -- to see where we are at fault -- and then in prayer to ask for pardon and right guidance.”

When we have known darkness then we can appreciate the light. We must allow the darkness in our lives to appear and move on if we are to appreciate the beauty and wonder of the light.

So Jesus had a big job of work to do to convince us He was who He was. “I am who I am!” is what God said to Moses back in the day, and that might have been enough for us. But the audience was too small, the reviews were mixed, and the word didn’t spread very fast. Don’t forget, this incursion into the human sphere would be a violation of God’s tacit agreement not to interfere in our affairs. We’re supposed to be on our own out here east of Eden. So how did God justify a departure from policy? (God is not an interesting idea; God is the maker of cosmic policy). It went like this: God was determined enough to know us – for God so loved the World -- so as to intervene once for all by coming on this two-pronged mission in Jesus. God’s determination to love took precedence over God’s policy to let go.

The only way to mitigate the effects of God's incursion it was to restrict any major difficulties, as much as possible to Jesus' physical person, rather than having an affect on individual humans. "I'll go down there disguised as a human – in human drag," thinks the Deity, "Nobody will notice me unless and until I want them to." As if. Jesus can't keep from healing people, can't resist preaching and teaching, telling deeply challenging stories; lots of people notice and are affected, even though he keeps saying 'Mum's the word.'

People were and still are being affected, deeply and permanently by the stories and activities of Jesus. The more Jesus tells people to keep the stories quiet, they more the stories get told abroad. We've been telling them ever since, to anybody who would listen and to many who would not or could not. That 'keep quiet' part of God's strategy didn't work, but the rest of it did. Jesus' determination to make a full journey through human life is what convinces us that he is what he is. Jesus' love (God's love) for the project of humankind is so great as to provide especially for the greatest need of humankind – the need we have for an awareness of God – despite the brutal cost of that providence.

Because it was only in dying by choice and for our benefit that Jesus could both share our experience fully and also convince us that we are worthy of God's love. As convincing as God's presence was in Jesus, it's not strange that we know God lives on and on in us. It transforms us makes us joyful indeed to think of the risen Christ, but it's no wonder; it is what it is.

Hymn 411 O bless the Lord, my soul

O bless the Lord, my soul! His grace to thee proclaim!
And all that is within me join to bless his holy Name!

O bless the Lord, my soul! His mercies bear in mind!
Forget not all his benefits! The Lord to thee is kind.

He will not always chide; he will with patience wait;
His wrath is ever slow to rise and ready to abate.

He pardons all thy sins, prolongs thy feeble breath;
He healeth thine infirmities and ransoms thee from death.

He clothes thee with his love, upholds thee with his truth;
And like the eagle he renews the vigor of thy youth.

Then bless his holy Name, whose grace hath made thee whole,
Whose loving-kindness crowns thy days: O bless the Lord, my soul!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AGKr_dNBpU

or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZZulHI0X4M>

Incendiary Art

The city's streets are densely shelved with rows
of salt and packaged hair. Intent on air,
the funk of crave and function comes to blows

with any smell that isn't oil—the blare
of storefront chicken settles on the skin
and mango spritzing drips from razored hair.

The corner chefs cube pork, decide again
on cayenne, fry in grease that's glopped with dust.
The sizzle of the feast adds to the din

of children, strutting slant, their wanderlust
and cussing, plus the loud and tactless hiss
of dogged hustlers bellowing past gusts

of peppered breeze, that fatty, fragrant bliss
in skillets. All our rampant hunger tricks
us into thinking we can dare dismiss

the thing men do to boulevards, the wicks
their bodies be. A city, strapped for art,
delights in torching them—at first for kicks,

to waltz to whirling sparks, but soon those hearts
thud thinner, whittled by the chomp of heat.
Outlined in chalk, men blacken, curl apart.

Their blindly rising fume is bittersweet,
although reversals in the air could fool
us into thinking they weren't meant as meat.

Our sons don't burn their cities as a rule,
born, as they are, up to their necks in fuel.

Patricia Smith