

## **The Sunday Missive – July 14, 2024**

### **The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost**

#### **Hymn 492 Sing ye faithful, sing with gladness**

Sing ye faithful, sing with gladness, wake your noblest, sweetest strain,  
With the praises of your Savior let his house resound again;  
Him let all your music honor, and your songs exalt his reign.

Sing how he come forth from heaven, bowed himself to Bethlehem's cave,  
Stooped to wear the servant's vesture, bore the pain, the cross, the grave,  
Passed within the gates of darkness, thence his banished ones to save.

So, he tasted death for mortals, he, of humankind the head,  
Sinless one, among the sinful, Prince of life, among the dead;  
Thus he wrought the full redemption, and the captor captive led.

Now on high, yet ever with us, from his Father's throne the Son  
Rules and guides the world he ransomed, till the appointed work be done,  
Till he see, renewed and perfect, all things gathered into one.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xo9IUSJCUpg>

#### **The Collect of the Day**

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

#### **2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19**

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the

ark. David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.

They brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord. When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

## **Psalm 24**

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it\* ***The world and all who dwell therein.***

For it is God who founded it upon the seas\* ***And made it firm upon the rivers of the deep.***

Who can ascend the hill of the Lord?\* ***And who can stand in God's holy place?"***

Those who have clean hands and a pure heart\* ***Who have not pledged themselves to falsehood, nor sworn with fraudulent words.***

They shall receive a blessing from the Lord\* ***A just reward from the God of their salvation."***

Such is the generation of those who seek you\* *Of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.*

### **Ephesians 1:3-14**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

### **Hymn 650 O Jesus joy of loving hearts**

Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts, Thou fount of life, Thou light of men,  
From the best bliss that earth imparts, we turn unfilled to Thee again.

Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood; Thou savest those that on Thee call;  
To them that seek Thee, Thou art good, to them that find Thee all in all.

Our restless spirits yearn for Thee, where'er our changeful lot is cast;  
Glad when Thy gracious smile we see,  
Blest when our faith can hold Thee fast.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7Ztjk\\_pLts](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7Ztjk_pLts)

### **John 8: 31-47**

Then Jesus said to those who believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever.

They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are indeed doing what your own father does." They said to him, "We are not illegitimate children; we have one Father, God himself." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God, and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God."

### **What Can I Do? -Proper 10B**

What does this letter to the Ephesians say to us? It is a prayer for our spiritual health. Love, Reality, Goodness, God, by whom every being in heaven and on earth is recognized, God will provide strength in our hearts through faith. Thus, we will have the power to accept the incomprehensibility of the breadth and length and height and depth of Creation and to experience love that surpasses mere knowledge. This

is the “Fullness of god.” May we set our hearts on these things -- the spiritual wisdom beyond knowledge

Wisdom is our Holy Grail. Notice four dimensions: breadth and length and height and depth. In other words, not just a description of things and people, but an understanding of them, beginning with ourselves. When New Testament people lived, it was thought that the heart was the seat of intelligence and thought. Emotions were thought to be centered below the heart, in the gut. So, when the letter petitions God that Christ may dwell in each of us, that indwelling begins with the mind, with knowledge, progressing to self-knowledge, and only then to spiritual wisdom and faith.

In the world of addiction treatment and recovery, the literature describes the course of any addiction. It is said that “We became ill – first spiritually, then mentally and emotionally, then physically.” In other words, the arc of addiction first entails the loss of spiritual knowledge, then it moves into the heart and gut, poisoning self-knowledge. Finally the physical symptoms of the disease start appearing, changes that catapult the addict into misery.

The addict becomes ill, first spiritually, then mentally and emotionally, then physically. For example, a little kid might steal something, just to see what it feels like. When caught, a normal personality would remember the instance as a marker of something not to do again, an opportunity for growth. But the addictive personality feels guilty about the stealing and vows – not never to do it again but – never to get caught again. This leads to lying, cheating, stealing: spiritual bankruptcy.

Next the progression is to the mental and emotional dimension; the addict begins denying the truth, especially truth about themselves if that truth blocks access to their drug of choice. This causes self-esteem to plummet even further and depression to rush in and occupy the ramparts of the mind. Relationships with others become less and less feasible as the addict’s relationship to herself deteriorates.

Finally, as the disease progresses, there are physical consequences: illnesses, injuries, crimes and misdemeanors, leading to hospitals, jails,

institutions and graveyards. The untreated addict will end up locked up, sobered up or covered up; so goes the adage.

Recovery from addiction proceeds in the reverse order. Addicts in successful treatment soon begin to recover physically, because they aren't actively poisoning themselves anymore. Then comes mental and emotional renewal: truth is no longer dreaded, but newly embraced; the word humility is learned; self-confidence, or at least self-regard returns; and she feels much better about life. Mind you, this is if the addict is in recovery; for the formula to work, she – or he has to act on any willingness to heal. She has to do something about it.

Eventually, a state is reached where there is some kind of peace and contemplation in her life again, the kind that might have existed had before she started stealing. Whatever her religious leanings, the addict in recovery takes on practices like meditation and prayer, that foster self-awareness and humility; insight and fulfillment. She becomes convinced of the fellowship of all humankind. Spiritual matters become more significant; surely goodness and mercy begin to follow the days of her life.

The way addiction recovery works -- by spiritual transformation -- is what the epistle writer means by praying that, according to the riches of God's glory, we may be strengthened in our inner being with power through the Spirit. Even if one has no other beliefs, in order to recover, (as opposed to merely surviving) there must be a conviction that there is such a thing as cosmic goodness, and that pursuing it is not only possible but desirable, important, even vital. This conviction must be demonstrated by reminding oneself that ceasing to pursue it is the fast track back to hospitals, jails, institutions and the graveyard.

Our separation from the grace of God, our loss of that peace which surpasses understanding occurs according to a similar pattern, spiritual deterioration followed by tragic mental, emotional and physical loss. If we are to recover, we must do so in the reverse order: physical practices like worship, meditation, and service to others leads to seeing the world more clearly and feeling better about what we see. This, in turn, eventuates in true humility, perspective and cosmic connection. But it begins with an invitation, a desire to stop running

away from life, from reality, from God; a willingness to change. Christ's love will live in us only as we open the door and invite it in.

Where once we were fearful, cynical, bitter and isolating, we become engaged with the world and all those in it. As spiritual health increases, we become more attuned to beauty, compassion and hope. Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote —

“Earth's crammed with heaven,  
and every common bush afire with god;  
and only she who sees takes off her shoes—the rest  
sit round it and pluck blackberries.”

This is not to condemn the plucking of blackberries, a noble and satisfying undertaking to be sure, but to insist there is more to a well-lived life; one must learn to pluck them mindfully.

The issue is in letting Christ change us. Having Christ dwell in our hearts is akin to having a new person move into our household. If they're just visiting, it's all rather easy. We simply offer hospitality and try to practice good manners. But if someone moves in, everything changes. At first we might try to hold onto your familiar patterns and routines, but eventually they make their mark, and we must change to accommodate them.

Nations can become addicted too – to power, to wealth, to brutal competition and violence, to pride. And they can go down the same sad roads. Again, the progression begins with spiritual cancer. In our case, the signers of the Declaration of Independence were the most progressive, exciting, admired people on the planet. But there was a fly in the ointment. Because slavery existed, and so much economic growth and so many fortunes were founded on the proceeds of it, our nation began its life spiritually out of whack. The truth can sound outrageous, but it is only by apprehending it that we are liberated from our addiction to self. There's no way the Gospel supports chattel slavery, yet our founders claimed to be Christian. All sorts of horrors have ensued.

Notice Jesus says, not merely that the truth will set us free, but that we will know the truth, and it will set us free. Until then, we are handicapped, imprisoned and paralyzed by our inherent vice, our besetting evil. We know (as Hannah Gadsby quips), “...more facts about unicorns than we do about ourselves...and there are no facts about unicorns.”

A nation’s mental and emotional decline or dysfunction might manifest itself in imperialist military activity in others’ countries. It might result in the genocide of native peoples, or the wanton befouling of the planet. The nation might become divided against itself. It might fail to take care of its poor, despite plentiful resources. Certainly its self-knowledge would cease.

And finally, the physical evidence begins to pile up: Perhaps a long and inestimably costly war on another continent, then another; traumatized young people, horribly polarized politics, debt, addiction to guns, addiction to incarceration.

All of this points the way to a nation’s recovery – first the physical: address injustice, hypocrisy, violence and corruption. Secondly the mental and emotional faculties return: economic cruelty, cynical manipulation, and habitual mendacity become less fashionable, and eventually recognized for their toxic effects. Kindness and justice return as virtues; unfriendly competition goes out of style. And finally, the spiritual dimension opens up and we might even take a place among the progressive, exciting and admired people on the planet.

Such it is with the promise of Jesus, such it is with the phenomenon of faith. It’s free, but it ain’t cheap. “Those who make comfort the great subject of their religion seem to mistake the proper end of ministry. Holiness is the great end. There must be a struggle and trial here. Comfort is a cordial, and no one drinks cordials from morning to night,” wrote John Henry Newman. But the miracle of transformation, of recovery from addiction, of renewal of the kind of faith that works under all conditions is a gift. It is a miraculous gift we give ourselves by allowing God to give it to us. Here is John Locke: “A miracle I take to be a reliable operation, which being above the comprehension of the



spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature is taken by him to be divine.”

As the medieval proverb goes, “Christ lets us sink, but does not let us drown.” It is in this sense that Christian knowledge is always something more than belief, something more than what the intellect can affirm. the heart has its reasons the mind cannot fathom.

It being Bastille Day, let’s give hear last word in the voice of a latter day holy one, the great French priest and scientist Teilhard de Chardin

If we do not believe,  
The waves engulf us  
The winds blow, nourishment fails,  
Sickness lays us low or kills us.  
If, on the other hand, we believe,  
The waters are welcoming and sweet,  
The bread is multiplied,  
Our eyes are open,  
The dead rise again,  
The power of god is as it were  
Drawn out by sheer force  
And spreads throughout all nature.

### **Hymn 448 O love how deep, how broad, how high**

O love, how deep, how broad, how high, how passing thought and fantasy,  
That God, the Son of God, should take our mortal form for mortals' sake!

For us baptized, for us he bore his holy fast and hungered sore;  
For us temptations sharp he knew; for us the tempter overthrew.

For us he rose from death again; for us he went on high to reign;  
For us he sent his Spirit here to guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.

All glory to our Lord and God for love so deep, so high, so broad;  
The Trinity whom we adore forever and for evermore.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FISOLTEy7-w>

## Some Kinds of Forever Visit You

The unknowns are up early;  
they browse through the bronze  
porch bells. Crows  
call & late  
apples blaze  
toward western emptiness.  
In your illness,  
the edges hesitate;  
like the revolt  
of workers, they  
will take a while...

Here comes the fond  
mild winter; other  
realms are noisy  
& unanimous. You tap  
the screen & dream  
while waiting; four  
kinds of forever  
visit you today:  
something, nothing,  
everything & art,  
greater than you are  
& of your making—

Brenda Hillman