

The Sunday Missive – June 12, 2022

Trinity Sunday

Hymn 686 Come, thou font of every blessing

Come, thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace!
Streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! O fix me on it, mount of God's unchanging love.

Here I find my greatest treasure; hither by thy help, I've come;
And I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood.

Oh, to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee;
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above.

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

The Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, forever and ever. *Amen.*

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out: "To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live. The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth— when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world's first bits of soil. When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

Psalm 8

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth* ***You have set your glory above the heavens.***

Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes* ***To silence the enemy and the avenger.***

When I look at your heavens, the work of your hands* ***The moon and the stars that you have established;***

What are human beings that you are mindful of us* ***Mere mortals that you should care for us?***

Yet you have made us little lower than angels* ***And crowned us with glory and honor.***

You have given us dominion over the works of your hands* ***You have put all things under our feet.***

All sheep and oxen, and all the beasts of the field* ***The birds of the air; the fish and all that passes along the paths of the seas.***

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth* ***You have set your glory above the heavens.***

Romans 5:1-11

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and

character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEgG63Mca0I>

OR

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJi-uKOILV4>

Luke 4:14-21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to

Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

I have a Secret

Sermon by The Ven. Douglas Edwards

The email arrived from Jeff: “10 children, rescued, more to come!”

I have a secret.

The statuesque African said that he had never had a more moving spiritual experience in his career as proctor of this world heritage landmark and museum. The rock stones leading into the dungeon were surprisingly slippery. The passageway was dark, only candle lit. None in our group of high-school aged pilgrims and their adult leaders could have imagined the setting—a simple blanket on a stone floor with tall, narrow brick walls; illumination from small ventilation openings, maybe fifteen feet above, the opening allowing only a hint of light to reach our group of pilgrims. Without candles you could only make out the image of the person next to you. We were in the male dungeon of Ghana’s Cape Coast Slave Castle, gathered on a Monday morning to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. With our African guides and the proctor, we numbered 12, secluded.

The castle is a place embedded in human history, a dark history of human misery evidenced by the centuries old blood and hair remnants matted into the clay mortar between the bricks. The youth dared to touch the walls, allowing themselves to become part of the story of the slave castle and allowing it to become part of our story.

Sitting on the blanket we sang a song written by a former slave-ship captain who converted to a champion against slavery. You know the song—
“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once

was lost, but now am found, 'twas blind, but now I see." We held hands and sang the Lord's Prayer, raising our hands in a humble attestation that to God belongs the Kingdom and the power and glory, forever...forever. We lifted our hands, hands unchained, on behalf of each of the 12.7 million souls sold into slavery and imprisoned in this string of castles, awaiting the transatlantic passage to the Americas.

I believe that it was Saint Gregory the Great who opined that time stands still during the canon of the mass. He was speaking eschatologically, not about chronology. He meant that in worship is presented the opportunity to participate in the fullness of time, to be part of all that has come before us and all that lies ahead. This is heady mysticism. But it is precisely in this context that we experienced a calling.

Jesus unrolled the Scroll from the Prophet Isaiah and found the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.... He has sent me to release the captive....To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

In the fullness of time, it was time to embrace, to love as if I had never been hurt, so I shared with my fellow pilgrims and friends, "I have a secret."

I am an Abolitionist. A what? An Abolitionist! What does that mean?

Today there are more than 42 million slaves. In West Africa, children are kidnapped or sold into slavery by their own family members. Young boys are forced into fishing boats and given the dangerous task of untangling nets underwater. Bought for *less than the price of a goat*, they are—expendable. In our own backyard, California's Office of the Attorney General reports that there are more than 40,000 enslaved persons in California...more than the number of Episcopalians in our Diocese.

A few years ago, my wife, Lynn, and I visited the National Underground Railroad Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio. The haunting question for us: "Would we have been part of ending slavery in America had we lived in Savannah in 1850?" "Or in Boston?" I don't know. But what I do know is this, there exists an underground railroad today and there is a group of us in the Episcopal Church who feel compelled to respond with our time, our life energy and our treasure to combat the scourge of slavery. **I am an abolitionist.** I have discerned a calling to be part of today's underground railroad, part of a movement that helps slaves escape their bondage and become whole again.

In the last five years we have rescued more than 300 children, including over 100 children this year alone.

I invite you to join us in this battle for human dignity. As Martin Luther King said, “The arc of justice is long.”

People of good will have asked, “What right do we have to place our values—that slavery should be abolished—onto another culture?” And of course, “Why don’t you focus on our local neighborhoods where there is ample need requiring attention?” On the first point, my response is to embrace the theological core of the Book of Common Prayer, our baptismal covenant, which includes this sacred vow, “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being? I will, with God’s help.”

I believe that God will help and bless this effort to respect the dignity of those who are enslaved-- **not metaphorically enslaved, but real slaves**. Daily congregations in the Diocese of El Camino Real are engaged in relieving local suffering. It is a false choice based on a theology of scarcity which would discourage helping those in West Africa or fire victims in Northern California because of local homelessness. A theology of abundance, under the law of love, assures us that we can be God’s hands in our homes, our neighborhoods, and foreign lands at the same time. **For to the Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, there is no foreign land.**

One of the riches of our Episcopal worship is that every Sunday we have an altar call—not like the Methodist or Baptist, but nevertheless an altar call. We are invited forward to kneel and be fed God’s own Self. We are also invited to come forward for solace. We are invited to the altar to be inspired, challenged by the One who loves us most, to dream dreams, and to receive our vocation-our marching orders for life. This morning, my invitation is for you to reflect on the horrors of slavery and to come to the altar asking this simple question, “Lord, what would you have me do?”

I have brought with me a simple cloth. It has the handprints of the children from our second rescue. It will hold today’s consecrated bread and forever connect you to real children-once slaves, now free.

The email arrived from Jeff. “18 children, rescued, more to come!”

And so I close with the secret revealed: proclaiming hope and remembering the vows I have made... I AM AN ABOLITIONIST. Amen.

Hymn 379 God is love, let heaven adore him

God is Love, let heav'n adore him; God is Love, let earth rejoice;
Let creation sing before him and exalt him with one voice.
God who laid the earth's foundation, God who spread the heav'ns above,
God who breathes through all creation: God is Love, eternal Love.

God is Love; and love enfolds us, all the world in one embrace:
With unfailing grasp God hold us, ev'ry child of ev'ry race.
And when human hearts are breaking under sorrow's iron rod,
Then we find that selfsame aching deep within the heart of God.

God is Love; and though with blindness sin afflicts all human life,
God's eternal loving kindness guides us through our earthly strife.
Sin and death and hell shall never o'er us final triumph gain;
God is Love, so Love for ever o'er the universe must reign.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24EFd8l2BEs>

Tender God

Tender God,
you have seen my affliction,
and unbound my eyes;
you have bereaved me of the burden
to which I used to cling;
you have woven my pain
into patterns of integrity;
the wounds I cherished
you have turned into honors,
and the scars I kept hidden
into marks of truth.
You have touched me gently;
I have seen your face, and live.

Mary Ellen Ashcroft