

The Sunday Missive – July 7, 2024

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Hymn 637 How firm a foundation

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
To you that for refuge to Jesus have fled?

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JdIrdKPfHA>

The Collect of the Day

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh. For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over

Israel.” So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inwards. And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.

Psalm 48

Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised* ***In the city of David is God's holy hill.***

Beautiful and lofty, the joy of all the earth, is the hill of Zion* ***For the faithful it is the center of the world.***

God is in her citadels* ***The Lord is her sure refuge and her strength***

As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of God* ***Who has established her forever.***

We have waited in silence for your lovingkindness* ***O God, in the midst of your temple.***

Your praise, like your Name reaches to the world's end* ***Your right hand is full of justice.***

Let Mount Zion be glad* ***Let the cities of Judah rejoice because of your judgments.***

Make the circuit of Zion; walk round about her* ***Count the number of her towers.***

Consider well her bulwarks; examine her strongholds* ***That you may tell those who come after.***

This God is our God forever and ever* *Who shall be our guide for evermore.*

2 Corinthians 12:2-10

I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Hymn 470 There's a wideness in God's mercy

There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in his justice, which is more than liberty.
There is welcome for the sinner, and more graces for the good;
There is mercy with the Savior; there is healing in his blood.

There is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than up in
heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings have such kindly judgment
given.

There is plentiful redemption in the blood that has been shed;
There is joy for all the members in the sorrows of the Head.

For the love of God is broader than the measure of the mind;
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful, we should take him at his word;
And our life would be thanksgiving for the goodness of the Lord.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9P5wCv0szCE>

Mark 6:1-13

Jesus came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Family Matters – Proper 9B

Jesus was born in the city of David because he was of the house and lineage of David. He was heir to the throne of David; the new David himself. So goes our foundational legend. One thing is very clear, as we try to make sense of holy scripture: family matters. Again and again in the Hebrew Bible, we are given genealogies, relationships and the impact of family connections as food for thought and reasons for action. Think of Cain and Abel, Leah and Rachel, Little Joe and his brothers, Naomi and Ruth.

Whereas modern-day ethical discussions and the works of popular culture often include disputes over how much favoritism to show family members over neighbors and strangers, the Bible, especially the Old Testament, seems to be concerned with something else. There are stories about near-kin favoritism and revenge over family insults, but far more plentiful and powerful are the ethical struggles that take place within families, amongst kinfolk. As Jesus responded when they alerted him to the presence of his family waiting for him outside the temple, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And, looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God, is my mother, my sister and my brother.”

Today we also hear a lot about “Community,” and a good thing it is, too. The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion struggle to maintain our community cohesiveness in the face of starkly differing points of view on a small number of volatile social issues – all having to do with gender and freedom of choice. As an antidote, we also talk about Ubuntu, the Bantu word for the interconnectedness we all must seek if we are to live in peace. Ubuntu provides the focus for meetings of the faithful everywhere because our intention is the nurture of community. There is a saying the Romans used to sign letters, ‘*Si Vales, Valeo*,’ ‘If you are well, then I am well,’ which echoes Ubuntu perfectly. Community has been vital to every successful culture. With our own country under serious threat of splintering and devolving, the only antidote is a deeper commitment to real justice in community.

Professor Michael Eze writes, “Ubuntu is a demand for a creative intersubjective formation: the ‘other’ becomes a mirror for my

subjectivity. Humanity is not bestowed upon my person solely as an individual, but upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and we need to participate in our creation: we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am.” Desmond Tutu offers another definition: “A person with Ubuntu is open to, available to and affirming of others, one who does not feel threatened that others are able and good. She or he belongs to a greater whole and is diminished when others are diminished, especially when others are humiliated, tortured, oppressed or lied to. Ubuntu speaks particularly about our interconnectedness; you can't be human all by yourself, and when you realize this you will become more generous.”

In the Hebrew Bible, Ubuntu, on the smallest and most intimate scale -- the family -- is of primary importance. When we think about neighbor love, we had best begin with our neighbor across the stableyard, at the other end of the fishing boat, next to us at the breakfast table, or across the pillow. Ubuntu begins at home. We might go a step further and say that Ubuntu begins within our own hearts and our own heads, where the forces and voices of instincts and ideals, dreams and duties are often in competition for our attention and energies. Not only are we bidden to love our neighbors as ourselves, as in ‘just like’ ourselves, we are bidden to love our neighbors along with ourselves. One of the things that makes English so hard for people to learn is the multiple meanings we have for the same words, so those of us who pretend to speak this language had better pay attention if we want to live our lives fully and fairly. ‘As well as’ can mean ‘equally well,’ but it can also mean – does also mean -- ‘in addition to.’

A useful way to think about this might be as a kind of trinity: God, self and neighbor. Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Now wait a minute, if everything we’ve got is going into number One, then what is left for number Two? Jesus needed a good editor... Unless... Jesus is saying “Love God completely because that will be the

only means for loving yourself and your neighbor. Loving God completely is the foundation of all community.” And vice-versa: If the second is like unto the first, the implication is like unto the Sammy Cahn lyric: “Dad was told by Mother: ‘You can’t have one, you can’t have none, you can’t have one without the other.’” We can’t love God without attention to both ourselves and our neighbors; we can’t love ourselves without God as the means of treating ourselves and each other well; we can’t love our neighbors without the power of God who is a deep cistern of charity from which we bathe and quench ourselves as well.

What does all of this have to do with David? Who is David, anyway? All the complicated exploits and ambiguities in David’s history are difficult, if not impossible to think of in the context of one single life. He is everyone’s daydream of a hero as he defeats Goliath. But David is everyone’s nightmare when, on the run from Saul, he works for the Philistines as a mercenary.

He is the glorious king, whose house has been known as God’s house for lo these three millennia; but he is also -- with Bathsheba -- an inglorious, vainglorious sexual predator, whose family relationships are positively sublime in their dysfunction.

Most importantly, David is our voice. The psalms we have been singing lo these three thousand years, Jew and Greek, East and West, Baptist and Papist, songs about our lives, our fears, our love and hatred for one other, our longing and hope for God, are known as “Songs of David.” Because these are David’s songs that we sing as ours, we get the idea that David is us. Triumphant, heroic, duplicitous, weak, creative, passionate, sometimes desperate but also hopeful; David is us. David is us, and it is our responsibility to look at his story, contemplate his name, and sing his songs to our children, if we would live as members of Christ.

So, when Jesus comes along, of the House and Lineage of David, to be born in the City of David, to inherit the Crown of David, we’re not exactly talking hidden meanings. In his humanity, Jesus is as much all of us as David was. Yet Jesus’ life is not full of confusion and violence done to others; he seems to know his way without all the mistakes.

All of you who came to Movie Night the other day were reminded of the old song? “I know where I’m going, and I know who’s going with me. I know who I love, but the Dear knows who I’ll marry?” In Jesus we have someone who knows where he’s going. And because the Dear – that is, the deity -- is both with him and in him, he becomes both David and us, but transformed. That’s why Jesus is called “The Son of Man.” Yet his life was not full of confusion and violence done to others; he seemed to know where he was going without all the mistakes we make. God has loved Creation enough to have visited us and been us, feeding with grace however many show up and teaching them to feed each other, walking right on the water if that’s what it takes to get our attention, and showing us the way to peace.

The wideness of God’s mercy extends neighbor love even to those who would kill his earthly body, so that whosoever takes the proffered hand and identifies with David in believing with hope may indeed falter, may even fail spectacularly. They may even die too young, and too, too hungry because of the failures of others or the violence of nature, but they shall not perish; they shall have everlasting life.

The hand is extended; the means of taking it are at our immediate disposal: Pursue interconnectedness – seek Ubuntu. Say to one another, “*Si vales, valeo,*” “If you are well, then I am well.”

Lift Every Voice and Sing Hymn 194 Lead me, guide me

I am weak, and I need Thy strength and power
To help me over my weakest hour;
Let me through the darkness Thy face to see, lead me, O Lord, lead me.

Lead me, guide me along the way; for if You lead me, I cannot stray;
Lord, let me walk each day with Thee. Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

Help me tread in the paths of righteousness;
Be my aid when Satan and sin oppress.
I am putting all my trust in Thee, lead me, O Lord, lead me.

I am lost, if you take your hand from me;
I am blind, without Thy Light to see;
Lord, just always let me Thy servant be, lead me, O Lord, lead me.

Lead me, guide me along the way; for if You lead me, I cannot stray;
Lord, let me walk each day with Thee. Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLpB-dE2DHM>

To E

The door was opened and I saw you there
And for the first time heard you speak my name.
Then like the sun your sweetness overcame
My shy and shadowy mood; I was aware
That joy was hidden in your happy hair,
And that for you love held no hint of shame;
My eyes caught light from yours, within whose flame
Humor and passion have an equal share.

How many times since then have I not seen
Your great eyes widen when you talk of love,
And darken slowly with a fair desire;
How many time since then your soul has been
Clear to my gaze as curving skies above,
Wearing like them a raiment made of fire.

Sara Teasdale