

The Sunday Missive – May 29, 2022 The Seventh Sunday in Eastertide

Hymn 7 Christ, whose glory fills the skies

Christ, whose glory fills the skies, Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of Righteousness, arise! Triumph over shades of night;
Dayspring from on high, be near; Day-star, in my heart appear!

Dark and cheerless is the morn unaccompanied by thee;
Joyless is the day's return till thy mercy's beams I see;
As they inward light impart, glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine! Pierce the gloom of sin and grief!
Fill me, radiancy divine; scatter all my unbelief;
More and more thyself display, shining to the perfect day.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chnlE-CnZYU>

First Reading -- Acts 1:1-11

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Psalm 47

Clap your hands, all you peoples* ***Shout to God with a cry of joy.***

For the Lord Most High is to be feared* ***Who is the great ruler over all the earth.***

Who will subdue the peoples* ***And the nations turn to righteousness.***

He chooses our inheritance for us* ***The pride of Jacob whom he loves.***

God has gone up with a shout* ***The Lord with the sound of the ram's-horn.***

Sing praises to God, sing praises* ***Sing praises to the Lord, sing praises.***

For God is ruler of all the earth* ***Sing praises with all your skill.***

God will reign over the nations* ***God sits upon a holy throne.***

The nobles of the peoples will gather together* ***With the people of the God of Abraham.***

For the rulers of the earth belong to God* ***And the Lord will be highly exalted forever.***

Second Reading -- Ephesians 1:15-23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Hymn 480 When Jesus Left His Father's Throne

When Jesus left his Father's throne, he chose an humble birth;
Like us, unhonoured and unknown, he came to dwell on earth.
Like him, may we be found below in wisdom's paths of peace;
Like him in grace and knowledge grow as years and strength increase.

Sweet were his words, and kind his look, when mothers round him pressed;
Their infants in his arms he took, and on his bosom blessed.
Safe from the world's alluring harms, beneath his watchful eye,
Thus in the circle of his arms, may we forever lie.

When Jesus into Zion rode, the children sang around;
For joy they plucked the palms and strowed their garments on the ground.
Hosanna our glad voices raise, hosanna to our King!
Should we forget our Saviour's praise, the stones themselves would sing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74kyfROS4q8>

Gospel Reading -- Luke 24:44-53

Jesus said to his disciples, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you-- that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

What's Up? -- Easter 7C - Ascension

We've been reveling in the wondrous news of Easter for forty days now, enjoying the annual honeymoon of Christianity and smiling because we know that "Christos Anesti, mos def Anesti." The actual forty days were up on

Thursday, the Feast of the Ascension, celebrating the time when Jesus was whooshed up in a cloud from Jerusalem after telling the disciples to be patient and wait. How thrilling, and how frustrating for them. But wait, isn't this the time when you were going to set everything right? ...Master? ...my Lord and my God?

So there they all are, looking up, when a couple of strangers come along and join them – like they do in New York: “Hey, what are we looking at?” The strangers are wearing white robes, so we know they're important – probably angels. One nudges a disciple in the ribs, but without waiting for an answer (angels being angels, they already know all the answers), they crack wise: “Don't worry about Jesus, he'll come back in just the same way he left.” Well that's a big help... What are we supposed to do? Forty days of excitement about the resurrection of Jesus from his tomb and now, “He'll be back?”

Predictably, there is a large measure of denial. He's not dead. Jesus even validates this by showing up – appearing in the Upper Room and on the beach – easing the pain of loss. Inevitably the forty days are up and we have to let go of him. How often do we tell each other, when a loved one dies, “We'll be together again one day or, “She's gone to be with her loved ones again?” As Sam Cooke sang, “I'm going home one of these days, to see the ones I love so dear; but meanwhile, I got to work right here. That's the sound of the man working on the chain gang.” Here is where we have to do our faithful work.

Yes, meanwhile, it's time to get back to the business of living. We know our redeemer lives and will come again, but while we live, we have to act. God is present when people are feeding each other and caring for one another, not just when they're theologizing. That's what the book of Acts is all about. The agenda, the theme of Acts is to move us from the wondrous story of the incarnation and ministry and teaching of God's very self among us, into the life we are meant to live, propelled by the Spirit. That's the part we have in us, the stuff we're made of, our soul food.

Our readings today ring out with news and promises of the reign of God. They are precious, uplifting and wondrous convictions to hold: “Jesus will come; clap your hands and shout for joy, for the Lord will be highly exalted; may you know the hope to which God has called you and the riches of God's glorious inheritance; all must be fulfilled.”

But surely we can be forgiven -- this decade, this year, this week -- if we cry out in response: “When, when and double-when?” On Memorial Day, we remember those who also gave their lives that others might live; that we

might live. And our gratitude is surely informed by the result of their intention: they gave their lives that we might more peaceably live. Those of us who are parents and grandparents are oh so thankful too that such sacrifices are not being demanded today. But one look at Eastern Europe and all too many other places in the world makes it plain that such things are far from unimaginable.

What we do have is martyrs. These are victims of the false idols of our pride: Shamefully-treated would-be immigrants; Profiled, disenfranchised and over-policed people of color; Uninformed, misinformed, defiant spreaders of disease; And most outrageously of all, children and their teachers in our schools whose lives are scattered to dust like dandelions in a high wind. Our pride and insistence on so-called rights continue to make it ever easier for evil thoughts to become horrible actions. The answer is not a question of taking away rights; it's a question of addressing wrongs.

And yet we hear people say, "Don't politicize this latest tragedy." In what many of us see as the most articulate political act in history, Jesus gave away his life to show us how love and compassion surpass even death. The least we can do is forfeit one of our hobbies for the sake of sanity and safety. There is nothing more political than innocent lives being destroyed because people in power defiantly refuse to act.

We hear people say, "It's a mental health issue." Oh please. Mental health issues have been around since the dawn of time. And people with mental health issues have always been more likely to suffer violence than cause it. But now, when someone who is homicidally sociopathic has the so-called 'right' to buy and bear automatic weapons, calling gun violence a 'mental health issue' is just a complicit lie.

For all of us teacher families, whether we or our loved ones have ever stood in front of a classroom, this experience is truly devastating. The anguish, the outrage, the cynicism and outright fear that threaten us so often these days poisons our ability to live peacefully and creatively into our calling and fills our lives with grief and doubt. There have been 27 school shootings this year in this country, and we hear people talk about 'psychic numbness.' Teachers and school families aren't numb; they're terrified; they're daily hostages.

We hear people say, "Our thoughts and prayers are with them." Thoughts and prayers are good, but what we need is action. God works through us. Those who talk about thoughts and prayers but whose actions not only fail to address, but clearly indicate refusal to address present problems and change

our culture are not working for the kingdom; they are not following in the footsteps of Jesus. Let's face it, they are ungodly. And like the drunken man who demands salvation of the deity, God puts their thoughts and prayers on hold.

May God grant us the courage to change this nation and culture of ours and the grace to throw off this horrifying and tragedy-perpetuating addiction we have to the gun. It is not about losing our rights or having the government take away our guns, it is about giving them up for the sake of our community — of our nation. Let's face it, we the people have forfeited the right to have guns without strict gun control. So, we must elect people who will pass the darn laws and get them enforced and let the rest of us get on with the complicated business of living. And let our police do their job of protecting and serving instead of what our inaction has forced them to do, which is to bully and lie about it.

As Christ has ascended, God's self has gone back to its original nature – the cosmic completeness of all matter and being -- after making it clear to us that we are indeed each one of us parts of this whole. But while we are here, in human history, just as God, in the person of Jesus was here in human history, we are meant to act. We are meant to teach one another, to find new ways of caring for one another and healing one another as long as we shall live. There'll be plenty of time for loafing 'round the throne later; but meanwhile, it's time to start providing for our family.

Hymn 450 All hail the power of Jesus name

All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all!

Crown him ye martyrs of our God, who from his altar call:
Praise him whose way of pain ye trod, and crown him Lord of all!

Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget the wormwood and the gall,
Go, spread your trophies at his feet, and crown him Lord of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe, on this terrestrial ball,
To him all majesty ascribe, and crown him Lord of all!

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

For my Mother

Once more
I summon you
Out of the past
With poignant love,
You who nourished the poet
And the lover.
I see your gray eyes
Looking out to sea
In those Rockport summers,
Keeping a distance
Within the closeness
Which was never intrusive
Opening out
Into the world.
And what I remember
Is how we laughed
Till we cried
Swept into merriment
Especially when times were hard.
And what I remember
Is how you never stopped creating
And how people sent me
Dresses you had designed
With rich embroidery
In brilliant colors
Because they could not bear
To give them away
Or cast them aside.
I summon you now
Not to think of
The ceaseless battle
With pain and ill health,
The frailty and the anguish.
No, today I remember
The creator,
The lion-hearted.

May Sarton