

Morning Prayer: Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, 6-28-2020

The Officiant begins the service with the sentence of Scripture. "Officiant" may be lay or clergy and Morning Prayer can be used in a group or individually.

The Invitatory and Psalter

Officiant Lord, open our lips.

People And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Officiant and People

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Then follows

The Psalm Appointed, read in unison

Psalm 89:1-4,15-18

1 Your love, O Lord, forever will I sing; *
 from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.
 2 For I am persuaded that your love is established for ever; *
 you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.
 3 "I have made a covenant with my chosen one; *
 I have sworn an oath to David my servant:
 4 'I will establish your line for ever, *
 and preserve your throne for all generations."
 15 Happy are the people who know the festal shout! *
 they walk, O Lord, in the light of your presence.
 16 They rejoice daily in your Name; *
 they are jubilant in your righteousness.
 17 For you are the glory of their strength, *
 and by your favor our might is exalted.
 18 Truly, the Lord is our ruler; *
 the Holy One of Israel is our King.

At the end of the Psalm is said

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
 as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Lessons

One or two Lessons, as appointed, are read, the Reader first saying

A reading from the Book of Jeremiah: 28:5-9

The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord; and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the Lord do so; may the Lord fulfill the words that you have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles. But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet."

The Word of the Lord.
to God.

Thanks be

Silence may be kept after each Reading. Then the following Canticle is said by all.

Glory to God *Gloria in excelsis*

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father;
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

A Reading from Paul's letter to the Romans: 6:12-23

Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you,

since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Then the following Canticle is said by all

Jubilate *Psalm 100*

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; *
serve the Lord with gladness
and come before his presence with a song.
Know this: The Lord himself is God; *
he himself has made us, and we are his;
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise; *
give thanks to him and call upon his Name.
For the Lord is good;
his mercy is everlasting; *
and his faithfulness endures from age to age.

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew: 10:40-42

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple-- truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The Rev. Marcea Paul

“And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.” - Matthew 10:42

How long, O Lord? Although the psalmist’s plea seems to be echoing across our nation and indeed across our world, Jesus is still calling us to compassionate welcome.

Since Pentecost, our gospel readings have challenged us to think about mission. We have received the Holy Spirit, and now the question is: How do we move into the world to help bring about Christ’s kingdom? This is our third week in Matthew’s tenth chapter, where we have been reminded to follow the apostles into the world, to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed, to move into the fields ready for harvest, and to pray for more workers. We have been warned that we will not be treated well on our mission and that it will create division even in our own homes.

Unlike Luke, Matthew makes no mention of the actual mission itself; we don’t know if the disciples went out or what their mission experience was. Scholars believe the omission is to highlight Jesus’ speech as a direct address to the readers. We are included in the audience – left not so much with an historical report of what occurred in the ministry, but with a description of its own ministry. As we end our time in this chapter, we learn that our role in the mission is not only as those who are sent out but also as those who receive others on the mission. The focus is on welcoming. Jesus uses the word “welcome” six times in this brief passage of only three verses and points us to the importance of hospitality in furthering Jesus’ Kingdom. We are called to consider more deeply what it means to welcome one another.

On reviewing the list from verses 40-42, we realize that this welcome can and ought to be practiced by us at any time, no matter what circumstances or crises we find ourselves in. We also come to realize that our welcoming does not need to consist of large, heroic acts. Any simple, basic acts of kindness we offer as genuine welcome for one another are all that God requires of us. All we need do is look around to see who is in need and try to do something about it.

This theology of hospitality perhaps reaches its fullest Christian expression in the final parable Jesus tells in Matthew’s gospel – the one most of us remember as the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. In that parable, Jesus reminds us that the way we treat those who are most vulnerable among us is, ultimately, representative of our response toward Jesus. Within the parable, Jesus refers to these vulnerable ones with whom he identifies as

“the least.” So, Matthew’s gospel, as a whole, reminds us that righteousness goes well beyond our relationship with God. Whether we are deemed righteous has a great deal to do with how hospitable we are toward one another, especially those who are most vulnerable among us.

As people of faith, we are called to promote compassionate welcome that motivates us to trust, to be open, and to share. At the same time, we need to exercise caution to avoid manipulating others and seeking personal gain. We set out with good intentions to form caring relationships, yet when left to our own devices, we sometimes fall short of creating and sustaining the kind of relationships that help us to become the people God has called us to be. Often times, pride, ego, self-doubt, hopelessness, and other sentiments get in the way and keep us from truly connecting with each other, except in self-interested ways. We need God’s grace to help us with living into compassionate welcome with one another and extending genuine hospitality.

Members of early Christian communities were called “little ones,” and regardless of their origin, the disciples of Jesus were encouraged to identify themselves with the little ones in the world, who in turn, are called to serve other such little ones. Our efforts to welcome and love the little ones are important because Jesus sees it and receives it as worship. When we love the little ones, we love Jesus. In welcoming one another into our hearts, Jesus tells us that we are welcoming him into our hearts — welcoming God into our hearts. It’s the old paradox, that it is in giving that you receive. It is in losing your life that you find it. It is in welcoming others that you experience Jesus’ welcome.

Friends, like all the small acts of devotion, tenderness, and forgiveness that go largely unnoticed but strengthen the relationships that are most important to us, the life of faith is also made up of many small gestures – gestures like making a phone call to ask how a friend or stranger is doing, dropping off groceries for the elderly, reaching out to the lonely and most vulnerable among us. According to Jesus, there is no small gesture. A cup of cold water is the smallest of gifts – a gift that almost anyone can give. But a cup of cold water is precious to a person who is really thirsty – in some instances, the gift of life itself. In the game of life, while we might prefer to be the quarterback – the hero – it seems that Jesus’ heart leans towards the water-boy or water-girl. Jesus does not specify the nature of the reward for those who help little ones, but in the kingdom of God, the smallest service brings with it eternal reward for the giver.

When poet and playwright Oscar Wilde was sent to prison in 1895, it was the ultimate humiliation for him. In his day, he was a real celebrity, but all that evaporated once he was convicted. Whenever the prison authorities moved him in public, he was spat at and jeered. On one occasion, when the crowd was particularly hostile, a friend of Wilde appeared and made a simple gesture of friendship and respect that silenced the crowd. What was this

simple gesture? As Wilde passed by, handcuffed and looking at the ground, the man simply raised his hat to him, the smallest of good deeds.

Later, Wilde wrote, “The memory of that lowly silent act of Love has unsealed for me all the wells of pity, made the desert blossom like a rose, and brought me out of the bitterness of lonely exile into harmony with the wounded, broken and great heart of the world.”

The smallest of good deeds: a little thing done in love. The cup of cold water is the symbol of that. It doesn't take much to be hospitable, welcoming, and accepting of other people. A cup of cold water replicated in a host of other simple, small deeds. And Jesus tells us that every single one of those small deeds is important – even eternally significant. It doesn't take much; every one of us can achieve these things, and every one of us can make that difference. We can find God in those smallest of good deeds.

My sisters and brothers, the roles of those who welcome and those being welcomed are interchangeable. We are all called to be Christ to each other. Jesus sends us to share the Good News, alleviate human suffering, to meet real needs, to work miracles of love and healing through acts of kindness... cups of water. We are called to remember that we, too, are to go as people willing to receive those same acts of kindness. When we welcome one another, we discover the reward that comes from the deep hospitality found in God's welcome of us.

Whoever gives you even a cup of cold water... will most definitely not lose their reward.

The Apostles' Creed

Officiant and People together

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayers

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Officiant Let us pray.

Officiant and People

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy Name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those

who trespass against us..

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

and the power, and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

Then follows this set of Suffrages

V. Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance;

R. Govern and uphold them, now and always.

V. Day by day we bless you;

R. We praise your Name for ever.

V. Lord, keep us from all sin today;

R. Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.

V. Lord, show us your love and mercy;

R. For we put our trust in you.

V. In you, Lord, is our hope;

R. And we shall never hope in vain.

The Officiant then says the following Collects

The Collect of the Day

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable

to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

This prayer for mission is added

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Intercessions and thanksgivings may follow.

Before the close of the Office the following is said by all

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

The Officiant concludes with the following

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*