

Worship Service
9th Sunday after Pentecost – July 25, 2021
St. Christopher-by-the-Sea
Gibson Island, Maryland

Introduction – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Hymn 542, stanzas 1-2

Christ is the world's true light

Minister: Blessed by God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

People: *And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.*

Minister: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Song of Praise

*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.*

Collect for 9th Sunday after Pentecost

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

O God, protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: 2 Kings 4:42-44 – see lesson insert

Psalm 85:8-13 – see lesson insert

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21 – see lesson insert

Hymn 488, stanzas 1-2

Be thou my vision

Gospel: John 6:1-21 – see lesson insert

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;
That we all may be one.

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;
That your Name may be glorified by all people.

We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons;
That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;
That there may be justice and peace on the earth.

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;
That our works may find favor in your sight.

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;
That they may be delivered from their distress.

Give to the departed eternal rest;
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;
May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

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Lord, hear the prayers of your people; and what we have asked faithfully, grant that we may obtain effectually, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Confession

Most merciful God,
We confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Absolution

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

Announcements and *America*

*My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
Long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light;
Protect us by thy might, great God, our King.*

Prayer of St. Chrysostom

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

Hymn 688, stanzas 1-2

A mighty fortress is our God

Dismissal

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Lessons for 9th Sunday after Pentecost – July 25, 2021

Collect: O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: 2 Kings 4:42-44

A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisaha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So he repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 145:10-19

All your works praise you, O Lord,
and your faithful servants bless you.
They make known the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your power;
That the people may know of your power
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an ever-lasting kingdom;
your dominion endures throughout all ages.
The Lord is faithful in all his words
and merciful in all his deeds.
The Lord upholds all those who fall;
he lifts up those who are bowed down.

The eyes of all wait upon you, O Lord,
and you give them their food in due season.
You open wide your hand
and satisfy the needs of every living creature.
The Lord is righteous in all his ways
and loving in all his works.
The Lord is near to those who call upon him,
to all who call upon him faithfully.

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel: John 6:1-21

Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew,

Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather upon the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near to the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Hymns for 9th Sunday after Pentecost – July 25, 2021

Hymn 542, stanzas 1-2

Christ is the world's true light

Christ is the world's true Light, its Captain of salvation,
the Daystar clear and bright of every race and nation;
new life, new hope awakes, for all who own his sway:
freedom her bondage breaks, and night is turned to day.

In Christ all races meet, their ancient feuds forgetting,
the whole round world complete, from sunrise to its setting:
when Christ is throned as Lord all shall forsake their fear,
to ploughshare beat the sword, to pruning hook the spear.

Hymn 488, stanzas 1-2

Be thou my vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
all else be nought to me, save that thou art -
thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou my great Father; thine own may I be;
thou in my dwelling, and I one with thee.

Hymn 688, stanzas 1-2

A mighty fortress is our God

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
for still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing:
dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his Name, from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 9th Sunday after Pentecost, July 25, 2021.

I am of the mind that every Sunday deserves a nickname. For me, this Sunday is Leftover Sunday.

Elisha the prophet is a successor to Elijah A tough act to follow. But Elisha does well. In the Second Book of the Kings (**2 Kings 4:42-44**), Elisha is responsible for a number of miracles, including the restoring to life of a young man, and the provision of food for 100 people, when such provision seemed impossible. Well, Elisha provided not just enough food to satisfy the hungry, but more than enough. “They will eat and have some left over.”

In John’s Gospel (**John 6:1-21**), Jesus provides fish and bread to a festival of people. The people ate, and there was food leftover. “When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, ‘This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.’”

St. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians (**Ephesians 3:14-21**), writes: “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine.” “All that we can imagine.” Talk about leftovers.

Even in today’s Psalm (**Psalm 145:10-19**), “more than satisfaction” is attributed to God. “You open wide your hand and satisfy the needs of every living creature.” Now, that’s a tall order. Impossible for you and me. Routine for God.

The Love is God is not just “enough,” but “more than enough.” These lessons don’t underscore just getting by, but being filled to overflowing. Leftovers, if you will.

Well, as confident as these lessons are for the characters within the lessons, you and I probably remain skeptical. For most of us, “overflowing” would not describe our experience.

Few of us have witnessed the kind of miracles described in these lessons. Yet most of us, if not all, believe that there are such miracles which reflect God addressing a needy situation. And, when people report such experiences, we tend to believe them, even though most of us can’t identify with them.

Why the belief when we have not had the experience? Or, have we had the experience, and simply didn't recognize it? Think of close-calls in your life. Who was responsible for the near-miss? Sometimes we are saved, and don't realize it. Sometimes there are leftovers, and we miss those as well.

Which takes us back to what we do know in general. Miracles do happen. There are leftovers that we don't deserve. There is God's Love in forms of all sorts that we don't recognize or acknowledge. Indeed sometimes it's not the leftovers we question, but the very existence of God.

When all is said and done, however, we come down on the side of belief and thanksgiving. We're here. And we're here to do a whole bunch of things, including:

- Giving thanks for a new day and new opportunities and new blessings.
- Asking God for help for situations and people who need a level of support beyond what we gladly offer.
- Reminding ourselves that the fear of not being in control ourselves does not negate God's power to change and improve lives.
- Sharing with one another in a common enterprise that has survived all sorts of threats and dilemmas.

Our Collect today is one of the finest in the Church calendar. "O God, the protector of all who trust in you – that you be you and I – without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy – we know that – increase and multiply upon us your mercy, that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal."

At our best, at our most faithful, we do not keep count of God's behavior, except to say thank you at all times. When there are clear blessings, we say thank you, Lord. When there are mixed blessings, we say thank you, Lord. And yes, when there appear to be no blessings, we say thank you, Lord.

Some would call us foolish. Well, if we are foolish, we are fools for Christ. And that faith is strong despite what some would call a lack of evidence. On the third day following the Crucifixion, some of the disciples went to the tomb. And it was exactly the lack of evidence, the lack of a tormented body, that was the real evidence that God had not forsaken Jesus, nor had God forsaken the disciples.

I love this notion that the lack of evidence is the evidence. And more evidence would emerge, including the Risen Christ himself. God had not forsaken Jesus, and God had not forsaken the followers of Jesus. And, just to bring things up date, God does not forsake us now. And that goes for the skeptics, if only they would accept that love.

We are bright people. We have questions. Sometimes those questions turn to doubts. But not for long. That's the value of the Church. It's a gathering place for people of faith who sometimes question even the existence of God, never mind leftover blessings. But ultimately we trust in the God who has been with generations of folks just like us.

Our job now – and privilege - is to keep this tested faith moving forward. And my guess is that even though many of us cannot pinpoint a miracle of healing in our own lives, we can testify that God's presence in the form of the Holy Spirit feels like a miracle in itself.

And guess what. It is a miracle in itself, with consequences for you and me and all those we touch with our honesty, our doubts, the constant renewal of faith that we experience in and through one another, and our thanksgiving for the whole package.

Remember the man from Baal-shalishah: "How can I set some loaves of barley and some fresh ears of grain before a hundred people?" The man said, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" And what happened? "They ate, and had some left."

And what happened to what was left? It was shared over many centuries in faith, in hope, in confidence. You are I are here as a result. And, by golly, those left-overs sure don't taste like left-overs. They are fresh and delicious, and, despite occasional doubts, they are worth sharing with generations to come.

Some of you were scouts or parents of scouts or both, and might remember some of the camp prayers offered at the start of each day. This is one of those prayers, and it just so happens to speak to today's theme of leftovers as a blessing for the next generation.

The Lord is good to me,
and so I thank the Lord
for giving me the things I need
the sun and the rain and the apple seed.
The Lord is good to me.

And every seed that grows
will grow into a tree,
and one day soon there'll be apples there,
for everyone in the world to share.
The Lord is good to me.

When I wake up each morning,
I'm happy as can be,
because I know that with God's care
the apple trees will still be there.
The Lord's been good to me.

God's leftovers. What a meal. A banquet really, with special friends and a very special host. Thank you, Lord. Amen.