

Fifth Sunday of Easter Service – May 15, 2022

Prelude

Hymn 559 – Lead us, heavenly Father

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us, for we have no help but thee,
yet possessing every blessing, if our God our Father be.

Savior, breathe forgiveness o'er us; all our weakness though dost know;
thou didst tread this earth before us; thou didst feel its keenest woe;
yet unfearing, persevering, to thy passion thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending, fill our hearts with heavenly joy;
love with every passion blending pleasure that can never cloy;
thus provided, pardoned, guided, nothing can our peace destroy.

Opening sentence - BCP page 40

This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Invitation to Confession – BCP page 41

So that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship Almighty God, let us, with penitent and obedient hearts, confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

Confession – BCP pages 41-42

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and have done those things which we ought not to have done. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

Absolution – BCP page 42

The almighty and merciful Lord grant you absolution and remission of all your sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Gloria – BCP page 42

O Lord, open thou our lips.
And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

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

Venite – BCP page 44

Come, let us sing to the Lord;
 let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
 and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great God,
 and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are all the corners of the earth,
 and the strength of the hills is his also.
The sea is his and he made it,
 and his prepared the dry land.
O come, let us worship and fall down
 and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For he is the Lord our God,
 and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.
O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
 let the whole earth stand in awe of him.
For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth,
 and with righteousness to judge the world and the people with his truth.

Psalm 148 – insert

First Reading: Acts 11:1-18 – insert

Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-6 – insert

Hymn 8

Morning has broken

Morning has broken like the first morning,
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall sunkut from heaven,
like the first dew fall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning
born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's recreation of the new day!

Gospel Lesson: John 13:31-35 - insert

Sermon

Apostles' Creed – pp 53-54

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;*

*And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried,
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father
almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.
Let us pray.

*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.*

Suffrages A – page 55

O Lord, show thy mercy upon us;
and grant us thy salvation.
Endue thy ministers with righteousness;
and make thy chosen people joyful.
Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;
for only in thee can we live in safety.
Lord, keep this nation under thy care;
and guide us in the way of justice and truth.
Let thy way be known upon earth;
thy saving health among all nations.
Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;
nor the hope of the poor be taken away.
Create in us clean hearts, O God;
and sustain us with thy Holy Spirit.

Collect for Easter 5 – insert

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Prayers for Sunday and St. Christopher- by-the-Sea - BCP p 56

O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Dear Lord, we give you thanks for St. Christopher-by-the-Sea. We remember with pride and admiration those who, in your Name, founded this chapel. We give thanks for their foresight and for the faithfulness of generations since, including on this day this generation. We are mindful that those who worship here on a given Sunday represent the whole Island community. We are grateful for the different backgrounds and traditions represented in this congregation, and for the loyalty and generosity of those who support the chapel with talent and treasure and good will. Continue to be with those who lead the congregation and contribute to its well-being in manifold ways. We offer, O Lord, our thanksgiving and our commitment in the Name of your Son Jesus. *Amen.*

General Thanksgiving - BCP pp 58-59

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

Announcements and *America*

Prayer of St. Chrysostom – BCP, p 59

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication unto thee, and hast 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.*

The Grace – BCP, p 59

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

Hymn 516 – Come down, O Love divine

Come down, O Love divine, seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardor glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn, till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace, till Love create a place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.

Dismissal

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

Postlude

Lessons for 5th Sunday of Easter – May 15, 2022

Collect: Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one god, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Acts 11:1-18

Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, saying, “Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?” Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’ But I replied, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ But a second time the voice answered from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane.’ This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.’ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?” When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, “Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.”

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

Psalm 148

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord from the heavens;

praise him in the heights.

Praise him, all you angels of his;

praise him, all his hosts.

Praise him, sun and moon;

praise him, all you shining stars.

Praise him, heaven of heavens,

and you waters above the heavens.

Let them praise the Name of the Lord;

for he commanded, and they were created.

He made them stand fast for ever and ever;

he gave them a law which shall not pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth,

you sea-monsters and all deeps;

Fire and hail, snow and fog,

tempestuous wind, doing his will;

Mountains and all hills,

fruit trees and all cedars;

Wild beasts and all cattle,

creeping things and winged birds;

Kings of the earth and all peoples,

princes and all rulers of the world;

Young men and maidens,

old and young together.

Let them praise the Name of the Lord,

for his Name only is exalted, his splendor is over earth and heaven.

He has raised up strength for his people and praise for all his loyal servants,

the children of Israel, a people who are near him. Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-6

I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." And so he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

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

Gospel: John 13:31-35

At the last supper, when Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews, so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

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

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 5th Sunday of Easter, May 15, 2022.

Life is full of interesting twists and turns. Some of these twists and turns are painful and some are insightful. And sometimes what is painful for one person is insightful for another. Such is the case this morning in the passage from the Book of Revelation.

We're not sure who is the author of Revelation. But we are sure, from the words themselves, that the author was in prison when he shared these thoughts.

Now, prison life is repetitive. The days follow a pattern, and that pattern broadly doesn't change much. Yes, given good behavior, there is a variety jobs and classes and activities that are available. But even these differences fall into a pattern. The schedule is repetitive. And that repetition itself can be crushing.

Unless the prisoner chooses "to make all things new." Where have we heard this phrase? From today's lesson from Revelation. "And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.'"

These words – "all things new" – from one whose daily, weekly, yearly schedule was pretty much the same. At least, the author of Revelation suggests this.

So, maybe the secret to surviving a repetitive life is to look for the "new." And not just look for the "new," but appreciate the author of the "new." For you and me, in this environment, the author is the Lord, and the "new" is "serving the Lord by serving others."

The nature of such service varies considerably. There is a lot of "new" every day. And much of this "new" is reflected in the lives of others. And, often the "life of others" includes "needs" that we can address. We can be helpful every day in some manner. And, in helping, we can enhance the life of others, as well as our own lives.

From today's Gospel: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Well, a big part of loving others is to recognize their needs and in some manner address those needs. Make someone's life a little better, and, in so doing, make one's own life a little better. Or maybe a whole lot better.

Now, in a prison environment, one has to be very careful reaching out to others. An offer to help can be misunderstood. Of course, that can be true in any environment. In prison, though, misunderstandings are really dangerous.

But, whatever the environment, caution should not prevent us from looking for the “new.” “What can I do today to make the world a little better?” We’re not talking just about big changes. We’re talking as well about small acts of kindness.

This is what you all do in your work and in your play. It is your nature to “see the new.” And, if that “new” is a need that someone has, you not only “see the new,” you “address the new” with some helpful action.

You fulfill the expectation of today’s Psalm: “Praise the Name of the Lord.” Look at all the objects of praise mentioned: angels, shining stars, fire and hail, creeping things and winged birds, old and young together.” People and things for which to be grateful.

A form of praise is serving others. And a precondition of service is the recognition of needs and the offer of help to address those needs.

Again, in a prison environment, one has to be careful about addressing needs. But “careful” doesn’t mean “oblivious” to needs. It means rather “thoughtful.”

Today’s first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, is about thoughtfulness. “And as I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the Word of the Lord, how he had said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’”

After each of our lessons, the reader says “The Word of the Lord.” And we respond with “Thanks be to God.” Another form of this exchange could be “Remember what we’re all about here,” to which we respond “Thanks for the reminder. We will remember.”

Thoughtfulness. It’s one of the things we admire about Jesus. And a critical part of his thoughtfulness was “What can I do to help?” What is new that I can help address? He saw needs and responded. He was watchful, thoughtful, and helpful. A different version of the Trinity? Yes, perhaps.

As individuals and as a congregation, you all are thoughtful about the needs of others. One of the ways you do this, we do this, is through the donations St. Christopher's gives each year to various service agencies in the area. Elizabeth and Opie continue to lead this effort. And you all, we all, continue to support it.

From time to time, representatives of the agencies we assist come to the Sunday service and share highlights of their community efforts. Our next visit will be next Sunday. More about that later. Those served by these agencies are grateful, as are the donors and the communities enhanced by these services. It's a good feeling, isn't it, to know that one is making a difference, however small or large.

"Making a difference." Some difference-making efforts are huge and some are small. All count. But they need to be recognized first. That's where you and I come in. We need to pay attention to the needs of others, large and small. And these needs vary. And some needs are new. All the more reason, therefore, to stay alert. Not passively stay alert, but actively look for needs, look for the new, offer to help.

Our final hymn today, *Morning has broken*, speaks of a "new day." A new day. New opportunities, even in surroundings where things are repetitive. We can bring to these predictable environments an attitude of thanksgiving and hope. In prison, others are in charge of most things, but not all. Hope is one of those things where we are in charge. Environment can crush a spirit, but the human spirit, grounded in the Holy Spirit can fight back, can make a positive difference in the life inside as well as outside.

If, at any point, we're feeling confined, we need to look for "all things new." Not just any old things, but opportunities to serve. They're out there, waiting for us, individually and collectively. Each day is an opportunity. "Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning! Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!"

It's what the hymn calls "God's recreation of the new day." And it can be ours, whatever the confinement.

Amen.