

St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland
Eighth Sunday of Pentecost, July 18, 2021

Welcome and Introduction – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Hymn 595, stanzas 1-2

God of grace and God of glory

Opening Sentence: The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

Confession

*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

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.*

Invitation to Venite and Psalm

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.

The Venite - seated

*O come, let us sing unto 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 hands 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 peoples with his truth.*

Psalm 23 – see lesson insert

First Lesson – Jeremiah 23:1-6 - see lesson insert

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

Second Reading – Ephesians 2:11-22 - see lesson insert

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

Hymn 645, stanzas 1 and 6

The King of love my shepherd is

The Gospel - Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

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

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

The Apostles' Creed - standing

*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.*

The Lord's Prayer - seated

*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 - seated

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.

Collects for Sundays, 8th Sunday after Pentecost, and Stewardship

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

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

O merciful Creator, whose hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us ever thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The General Thanksgiving

*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 our selves 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

*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 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

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 551, stanzas 1-3

Rise up, ye saints of God!

Dismissal

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

Lessons for 8th Sunday after Pentecost – July 18, 2021

Collect: Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord. The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness on the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

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

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures

and leads me beside still waters.

He revives my soul

and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;

for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;

you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Second Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

Remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the un-circumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision” – a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands – remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

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

The Gospel: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized him, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When they had crossed over, they came to the land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the market places, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

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

Hymns for 8th Sunday after Pentecost – July 18, 2021

Hymn 595, stanzas 1-2

God of grace and God of glory

God of grace and God of glory, on thy people pour thy power;
Crown thine ancient Church's story; bring her bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour.

Lo! the hosts of evil round us scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us free our hearts to faith and praise:
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days.

Hymn 645, stanzas 1-2 and 6

The King of love my shepherd is

The King of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his, and he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow, my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow, with good celestial feedeth.

And so through all the length of days thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise within thy house for ever.

Hymn 551, stanzas 1-3

Rise up, ye saints of God

Rise up, ye saints of God! Have done with lesser things,
Give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the King of kings.

Rise up, ye saints of God! His kingdom tarries long:
Lord, bring the day of truth and love and end the night of wrong.

Lift high the cross of Christ! Tread where his feet have trod;
And quickened by the Spirit's power, rise up, ye saints of God!

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 8th Sunday after Pentecost, July 18, 2021.

I want to speak today about “taking stock.” I’m not talking about live-stock or stocks and bonds or stocking shelves. I’m talking rather about self-assessment. Where are we? Where am I?

The reference point, the context for this discussion, is our decision to believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the embodiment of the Love of God.

Some of us here this morning are weighing whether we want to go down this path of allegiance to Jesus. Others of us are absolutely confident that we’ve made the right choice. Questions perhaps every now and then, but on the whole quite content with the decision we’ve made.

Whatever conclusion we’ve reached, what vehicle, what instrument, are we using to reach that conclusion? Is it just a feeling, or is it a more precise evaluation?

Well, in most arenas, evaluations need some precision. We use the word “instrument” for a reason. Instrument suggests precision. Using an instrument gives us some confidence in the outcome.

So, where do we find an instrument to help us evaluate how we’re feeling about our belief in Jesus as God Incarnate, God in human flesh?

What I’m suggesting today is that a useful instrument is the **23rd Psalm**, which is one of our featured lessons today.

Yes, Psalm 23, not just a beautiful portrayal of “the house of the Lord,” but a very helpful tool for evaluating just how we’re feeling about our decision to accept the Lord’s offer to enter his House.

Look at verse 1: **“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.”** That’s a pretty strong statement. “I shall not be in want.” I have committed to Jesus. Is there more that I want from this relationship? The Psalm is clear: “I shall not be in want.” On a scale of 1 to 10, this sure sounds like a 10. God has done His part. But, have we done our part? Let’s return to our instrument.

Look at verse 2: **“He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.”** In other words, there is the promise of comfort. No dry pastures and no rough waters. In terms of trust, is this very positive sense of comfort where we are? Maybe not a 10, but how ‘bout a 7 or an 8? I’m feeling pretty good, but perhaps with reservation.

Verse 3: **“He revives my soul, and guides me along right pathways.”** Is my belief in Jesus helping me maintain a positive outlook and choosing positive directions? To what extent is my belief and allegiance helping me be the kind of person I want to be? This goal is tougher, isn’t it? Does Jesus help me bounce back from any behavior that I regret? Honestly, maybe we’re talking a 5 or 6.

Verse 4: **“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil.”** Now, that level of faith is a high bar. “I shall fear no evil.” But wait a minute. I do fear things from the outside and from the inside. I fear my own behavior, and I fear the human condition, and I fear that I will disappoint the people I love. Even a 5 or 6 seems high. Maybe a 4 or 5. Maybe even a 2 or 3.

Verse 5: **“You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me.”** In Jesus, God has anointed me. But is that how I feel? Is my cup running over, or is the cup almost empty? Where am I in this relationship? Probably not “running over,” but also probably “not empty.” Let’s give this one a 6 or maybe even a 7. I have a pretty strong sense of assurance, but with room to grow.

Verse 6 is tricky. **“All the days of my life”** and **“in the house of the Lord for ever”** seem premature. But there is a sense, isn’t there, that I’m on the right track. I’m in this relationship for the long haul. At least this is how I’m feeling right now. Yes, I’m giving this one an 8 or 9.

Overall, as I take stock of my decision to believe in Jesus as the embodiment of the Love of God, I’m feeling pretty good. Not just in a vague way, but in a more precise way. I am using a “taking stock” instrument, Psalm 23, and overall I am satisfied. Yes, more growth needed certainly, but not a bad start, thanks in large part to the Lord himself. After all, I have used an instrument that the Lord himself endorsed: the 23rd Psalm.

Now, the 23rd Psalm is not the only instrument one can use to “take stock.” Scripture is full of passages that can help us evaluate just how well we are doing in terms of our decision to follow the Lord.

For example, in today’s passage from Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 23:1-6**), the Lord promises to “gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.”

One of the features of worshipping the Lord is knowing that the Lord is on our side. Even when we stray from what the Lord desires, we have a second chance. And a third chance. And who knows how many chances. If you are like me, you lost track a long time ago. Not only does the Lord bring us back into His fold, He promises to help us be fruitful and multiply. The Lord’s expectations are a gift, and so is the Lord’s forgiveness. “Justice and righteousness” and “living in safety” are part of the relationship the Lord offers you and me.

In his letter to the Ephesians (**Ephesians 2:11-22**), St. Paul speaks of “once being far off,” but now “being brought near by the blood of Christ.” Paul emphasizes that Jesus is the “cornerstone.” Reliable, sturdy, someone we can count on, even when we go astray. Maybe especially when we go astray.

Mark (**Mark 6:30-34, 53-56**) makes clear that Jesus is available. We can touch the fringe of his cloak, and, in doing so, we can be healed.

And right here is another instrument available to us as we evaluate our relationship with the Lord. We know that he has reached out to us. He has even died on a cross for us. Now it is our turn. The fringe of this cloak is available 24-7. How well are we doing at touching that cloak?

Fortunately for us, that cloak, that opportunity for growth, is always available. Have we reached out for it? Have we touched it? And, if so, have we said thank you for the benefits of that touching?

Knowing us, being human, our reaching and touching are probably not a 9 or 10. But, God-willing, and we ourselves willing, we’re getting closer. And part of that

“getting closer” is a self-evaluation of how well we are doing. And that assumes that we have an instrument of self-evaluation, an instrument like 23rd Psalm.

“Taking stock.” It’s what we try to do here as a congregation. It’s what we try to do as a family and as individuals. And it’s all for the good. Knowing where we are, relative to where our Lord wants us to be, is a useful exercise. It’s called prayer. And, even here, the Lord gives us a heads-up. It’s called the Lord’s Prayer. Another evaluation instrument.

What all these instruments tell us is that, no matter how well we are doing, there is room to grow. And guess who is in that “room to grow.” It is the Lord himself. Waiting for us and very happy to see us. No wonder we love the Lord.

Amen.