

Worship Service

3rd Sunday after Pentecost – June 13, 2021

St. Christopher-by-the-Sea

Gibson Island, Maryland

Introduction – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Hymn 596, stanzas 1-2

Judge eternal, throned in splendor

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 3rd Sunday after Pentecost

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Ezekiel 17:22-24 – see lesson insert

Psalm 92:1-4, 11-14 – see lesson insert

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:6-17 – see lesson insert

Hymn 587, stanzas 1 and 3

Our Father, by whose Name

Gospel: Mark 4:26-34 – 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 598, stanzas 1 and 4

Lord Christ, when first thou cam'st to earth

Dismissal

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

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Hymns for 3rd Sunday after Pentecost – June 13, 2021

Hymn 596, stanzas 1-2

Judge eternal, throned in splendor

Judge eternal, throned in splendor, Lord of lords and King of kings,
with thy living fire of judgment purge this land of bitter things;
solace all its wide dominion with the healing of thy wings.

Still the weary folk are pining for the hour that brings release,
and the city's crowded clangor cries aloud for sin to cease;
and the homesteads and the woodlands plead in silence for their peace.

Hymn 587, stanzas 1 and 3

Our Father, by whose Name

Our Father, by whose Name all fatherhood is known,
who dost in love proclaim each family thine own,
bless thou all parents, guarding well, with constant love as sentinel,
the home in which thy people dwell.

O Spirit, who dost bind our hearts in unity,

who teachest us to find the love from self set free,
in all our hearts such love increase, that every home, by this release,
may be the dwelling place of peace.

Hymn 598, stanzas 1 and 4 *Lord Christ, when first thou cam'st to earth*

Lord Christ, when first thou cam'st to earth, upon a cross they bound thee,
and mocked thy saving kingship then by thorns with which they crowned thee:
and still our wrongs may weave thee now new thorns to pierce that steady brow,
and robe of sorrow round thee.

O wounded hands of Jesus, build in us thy new creation;
our pride is dust, our vaunt is stilled, we wait thy revelation:
O love that triumphs over loss, we bring our hearts before thy cross,
to finish thy salvation.

Lessons for 3rd Sunday after Pentecost – June 13, 2021

Collect: Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in our steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament: Ezekiel 17:22-24

Thus says the Lord God: I myself will take a spring from the lofty top of a cedar; I will set it out. I will break off a tender one from the topmost of its young twigs; I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it, in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar. Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind. All the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord. I bring low the high tree, I make high the low tree; I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I the Lord have spoken; I will accomplish it.

Psalm 92:1-4, 11-14

It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord,

and to sing praises to your Name, O Most High;

To tell of your loving-kindness early in the morning

and of your faithfulness in the night season;

On the psaltery, and on the lyre,

and to the melody of the harp.

For you have made me glad by your acts, O Lord;

and I shout for joy because of the works of your hands.

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,

and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.

Those who are planted in the house of the Lord

shall flourish in the courts of our God;

They shall still bear fruit in old age;

they shall be green and succulent;

That they may show how upright the Lord is,

my Rock, in whom there is no fault.

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 5:6-17

We are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord – for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences. We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an

opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all, therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Gospel: Mark 4:26-34

Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come." He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, to that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea,
Gibson Island, Maryland, June 13, 2021.**

As I read the Collect and Lessons for today, I thought about you all and this wonderful little church that is approaching its 100th birthday. Still a year or so off for the church, but on the radar. Planning has begun, not just for the Island, but for St. Christopher's.

Now, you weren't there at the church's beginning, but many of your families were. And you sure have played a role in its continuity. You're doing so right now.

From today's Collect: Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister justice with compassion. "Proclaim the Lord's truth with boldness" and "minister justice with compassion."

That's what we try to do here, week after week. We have a job to do, a job we have accepted freely. And it's a job that has been executed faithfully for a century. If there were any Sundays at all when people didn't gather, it was because of weather or calamity. Never for lack of devotion.

Look at the passage from Ezekiel (**Ezekiel 17:22-24**). "I will plant it – a sprig from a cedar tree – that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar." Faith has been shared. Faith has been planted. Some of you are the children and grandchildren of the early planters. And now you are carrying the torch.

And what is the result of that faithfulness? Today's Psalm (**Psalm 92:1-4, 11-14**) answers this question. "Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of God They shall still bear fruit they shall be green and succulent."

You all are the recipients of Faith and now custodians of Faith and sharers of Faith. Sometimes this custodial role is frustrating because you're never sure whether what you have planted is bearing fruit. But that uncertainty doesn't stop you from planting, because you realize that you're not in this enterprise alone.

There is the Creator of the Universe in the form of God the Holy Spirit at your back. We observe that Divine presence, that Divine assist, that Divine assurance, each time we gather. And it has been so for nearly a century. St. Paul captures this collaboration in Second Corinthians (**2 Corinthians 5:6-17**): "So, if any one is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

On the 100th birthday of St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, everything is new. That's our conviction, and that's our promise. We try to exemplify the newness that the Lord offers. It is safe to say that you love it when people ask, "Tell us about the chapel just beyond the monument." Bingo. A new opportunity to share.

Today's passage from Mark's Gospel (**Mark 4:26-34**) is about St. Christopher's and about you all. "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow." You scatter seeds of faith. When sown they are small; yet when they grow they become great shrubs, which put forth large branches, so that a new generation of Island residents can "make nests in its shade."

Now, it is true that attendance these days is modest, at least for many Sundays. But interest and pride continue to be high. I am certain that Island residents who rarely or ever attend a service nonetheless sometimes brag about the existence of this wonderful church on the Island.

Its placement just off the causeway was brilliant. One passes by the church coming and going. There is a reverence for the property, a reverence that has been heightened by the addition of the memorial garden. Regular worship takes place without missing a beat in a beautiful building, and social and educational gatherings of all sorts take place in the handsome and functional parish hall with a brand new deck and spruced up grounds.

St. Christopher's is a happening place, as it should be. I think Jesus is delighted with what goes on here. And this devotion and outreach have been happening for nearly a century. It's a great story. You all are a great story. A century of proclaiming the Good News, with another century to go, "putting forth large branches, so that new birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

"Wait just a minute" you say. Yes, we have "proclaimed the Lord's truth with boldness," but have we really "ministered justice with compassion"? I would say "Absolutely!" Your ministry, our ministry, is not confined to this Island or this building. Ministry goes wherever you go. You fight for justice in how you interact with people and situations and possibilities. You do it in your professional lives and your personal lives. Sunday worship is training for what you do on Monday.

You carry your Faith with you. It shows in ways you don't realize. How you treat people, what your priorities are. If you see injustice, you respond. First with curiosity, then with investigation, then with consideration, then with action. This concern for justice is second nature for you. Some of this ministry is here, on the

Island. But much of it is off Island. It's where you work, where you travel, where you visit family and friends, and how you influence your respective professions.

When I think about you all, I envision you in multiple places. You are not idle. You cross that causeway hundreds of times in a given year, sometimes for work, sometimes for volunteering, sometimes to accompany friends and neighbors, sometimes to visit loved ones in the hospital, sometimes to engage others in all sorts of ways. You don't leave the Island to escape. You leave to engage.

And, if home is elsewhere, you don't visit the Island to escape. You might think so, but notice what happens when you get here. You interact with neighbors, including supporting one another in this chapel.

This is a place to get refreshed, to be reminded of God's love, to make promises to share that love, especially with those whose situations require assistance, and to channel those assisting efforts. You are thoughtful, generous, creative, and faithful. That is, full of Faith. And one of the ingredients in this make-up is this place and, more important, you in this place.

The beauty of this little church, the beauty that is captured in paintings and drawings and sketches, is more than architecture. It is the people who are strengthened here for the Lord's service. When I see a painting or photograph of St. Christopher's, I see the folks inside, seeking forgiveness, yes, but also seeking encouragement from Scripture to, yes, "minister justice with compassion."

Here's the ending to today's Gospel passage: "With many such parables he spoke the word to them, and they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples."

As a congregation and as individuals, you are living parables. You share your Faith in all sorts of ways, depending on the situation, the needs of others, and your gifts and talents. You don't withhold. You live out. Verse 2 of Psalm 92: "To tell of your loving kindness early in the morning and of your faithfulness in the night season."

100 years. A nice round number, reflecting ministry accomplished, ministry under way, and ministry unforeseen. Buckle up, planters and harvesters. We're just getting started.

Amen.