

Worship Service
Seventh Sunday of Easter – May 16, 2021
St. Christopher-by-the-Sea
Gibson Island, Maryland

Introduction – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Hymn 525, stanzas 1-2

The Church's one foundation

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 Seventh Sunday of Easter

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

First Reading: Acts 1:15-7, 21-26 – see lesson insert

Psalm 1 – see lesson insert

Second Reading: I John 5:9-13 – see lesson insert

Hymn 620, stanzas 1-2

Jerusalem, my happy home

Gospel: John 17:6-19 – 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 561, stanzas 1-2

Stand up, stand up for Jesus

Dismissal

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

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 7th Sunday of Easter, May 16, 2021.

You will note on today's lesson insert that there are two titles: Seventh Sunday of Easter and The Sunday after Ascension Day.

Ascension Day is 40 days after Easter. During this 40 day period, Jesus was again physically with the disciples. He had died on a cross and had been buried. But three days later he rose from the dead, and spent an additional in-person period assuring the disciples that Resurrection is stronger than Crucifixion. Good is stronger than Evil.

Imagine what this 40 day period must have felt like for the disciples. Certainly amazed and gratified that their Lord was with them again, but no doubt anxious about what was ahead. How long would the Risen Christ be with them? When would this bonus-time end?

Well, they would get their answer: on the 40th day. At which point Jesus would leave them again, but with a promise. Namely that God would never leave them, a promise that would be fulfilled shortly. Next Sunday we will observe that fulfillment. It's called Pentecost, 50 days after Easter.

Today – the Sunday between Ascension and Pentecost, between the 40 day mark and the 50 day mark – deserves special recognition. Why? Because in a sense we are on our own. It's as if Jesus, who had jumped into the pool to save us on Easter, is now out of the pool, with a promise that he will be back. But we don't know when. He didn't say, "I'll be back in 10 days."

So, what do we do? Well, staying with the pool analogy, we start paddling. We go to work, confident that our Savior will return. And, here we are, between Ascension Day and Pentecost. Is there a more appropriate time for an Annual Meeting than today? I don't think so. It's a time to think about what the Risen Christ would expect of us in his physical absence. How is our paddling going?

And that's of course what the Annual Meeting is all about. A review of progress made and progress desired. From the first verse of **Psalm 1**: "Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, nor lingered in the way of

sinner, nor sat in the seats of the scornful! Their delight is in the law of the Lord.”

Today’s lesson from John’s Gospel (**John 17:10**) makes clear that Jesus is never far from the scene. “And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”

The Risen Christ has given us a task, namely to represent him to our generation. The paddling we are doing in the pool has a purpose. And it’s not just to keep ourselves afloat, but to help others stay afloat. “Social service” is just one of the names we give to this exercise.

All the things that will be highlighted at the Annual Meeting have a purpose beyond our personal well-being. Again from John’s Gospel: “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

Today’s passage from the First Letter of John (**1 John 5:10**) reminds us that we have the testimony of God in our hearts. Not just to make us feel right with the world, but to share that conviction with others.

Like all worshipping communities, St. Christopher’s is not intended as a place of refuge for a few. It is intended rather as a place of preparation for service to many. Yes, the Risen Christ commissions us. “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” (**John 17:18**)

Today’s meeting is a review of “being sent into the world.” Much of this review will reflect what we do as a group. But much of what we do is not as a group, but as individuals. So, as we recognize collective effort, remember that individual effort is essential to our mission of sharing the Good News of Christ. We are not Christ’s representatives just on Sunday morning or just at the Annual Meeting. No, we are full-time representatives. Baptism is our badge, our name-tag. People should know us by our faith.

At the conclusion of our Sunday service, the minister reminds us to “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” And what is our response? “Thanks be to God.” We

thank God for assigning us a task, namely to “love and serve the Lord.” We are commissioned to serve. And we’re grateful. We love the assignment.

Congregations like this one reflect really well this sense of “loving the assignment.” Isn’t it true that when we are welcomed into a community, be it a neighborhood or job or society, we say “Thank you for the invitation. Now, what can I do? How can I be helpful? I’m ready to serve. Give me a task.”

At the conclusion of John’s Gospel (**John 21:15-19**), there’s an important exchange between Jesus and Peter. Peter asks Jesus what he, Peter, needs to do. Jesus gives three answers. “Feed my lambs.” “Feed by sheep.” And “Follow me.”

That was the assignment for Peter. And it is so for you and me. We’re here this morning because in some manner we have thanked God for the invitation to be a disciple, and we have looked for ways to express that discipleship, both as an individual and as a congregation. And every now and then, we come together to review these experiences, learn from them, and, if necessary, adjust our strategies, both individual and collective.

In this morning’s lesson from the Acts of the Apostles (**Acts 1:23-26**), there is a disciple vacancy, which is filled by Matthias. “He was added to the eleven apostles.” He is sometimes remembered as the Patron Saint of Substitutes. He made himself available for duty, and when selected, he said “Yes, I’m ready.”

Fast forward twenty centuries. And here we are, a bunch of substitutes, taking the spots of those disciples no longer with us. And it’s a privilege, isn’t it? But the exercise of that privilege doesn’t happen without planning and execution. We have to stay in touch, and one of the ways we do that is to have, not just a weekly worship service and other gatherings, but an annual meeting.

And, again, here we are. And what do we say? “I’m ready to serve. What more can I do? When can I start?” And what does Jesus say? “Follow me.” And so we do.

Amen.

Lessons for the 7th Sunday of Easter – May 16, 2021

Collect: O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

First Reading: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, “Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus – for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry. So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us – one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, “Lord you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Psalm 1

Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!
Their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and they meditate on his law day and night.
They are like trees planted by streams of water,
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither;
everything they do shall prosper.
It is not so with the wicked;
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes,
nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.
For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked is doomed.

Second Reading: I John 5:9-13

If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Gospel: John 17:6-19

Jesus prayed for his disciples, "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them in the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth."

Hymns for 7th Sunday of Easter – May 16, 2021

Hymn 525, stanzas 1-2

The Church's one foundation

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation by water and the word:
from heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy Name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.

Hymn 620, stanzas 1-2

Jerusalem, my happy home

Jerusalem, my happy home, when shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end? Thy joys when shall I see?

Thy saints are crowned with glory great; they see God face to face;
they triumph still, they still rejoice in that most happy place.

Hymn 561, stanzas 1-2

Stand, stand up, for Jesus

Stand up, stand up, for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross;
lift high his royal banner, it must not suffer loss:
from victory unto victory his army shall he lead,
till every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up, stand up, for Jesus; the trumpet call obey;
forth to the mighty conflict in this his glorious day:
ye that are his now serve him against unnumbered foes;
let courage rise with danger, and strength to strength oppose.