

*St. Christopher by the Sea
Gibson Island*

Last Sunday after Pentecost, November 21, 2021
Holy Communion, Rite II

Ministry of the Word

Hymn 616, stanzas 1-3	<i>Hail to the Lord's Anointed</i>	
Acclamation	Book of Common Prayer, page 355	
Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit		
<i>And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen</i>		
Collect for Purity		355
Glory to God in the Highest (S280)		356
Collect for Last Pentecost		Insert
First Reading: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14		Insert
Psalm 93		Insert
Second Reading: Revelation 1:4-8		Insert
Hymn 325, stanzas 1-2	<i>Let us break bread together</i>	
Gospel: John 18:33-37		Insert
The Holy Gospel according to John.		
<i>Glory to you, Lord Christ.</i>		
.....		
The Gospel of the Lord.		
<i>Praise to you, Lord Christ.</i>		
Sermon	The Rev. Charles Rowins	
Nicene Creed		Page 358
Prayers of the People, Form IV		Page 388
Confession and Absolution		Page 360

The Peace

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

Announcements and Recognition of Special Occasions

Ministry of the Sacrament

Offertory Sentence

Offertory Anthem

Hymn 380, verse 4 *Praise God, from whom all blessings flow*

Eucharistic Prayer A Page 361

Sanctus (S130) Page 362

Lord's Prayer Page 364

Breaking of the Bread Page 364

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

Invitation to Communion Page 364

Post Communion Prayer Page 365

Blessing

Hymn 541, stanzas 1-3 *Come, labor on*

Dismissal

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

Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Hymns for the Last Sunday after Pentecost – November 21, 2021

Hymn 616 – Hail to the Lord's Anointed, stanzas 1-3

Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed, his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free;
to take away transgression, and rule in equity.

He comes with succor speedy to those who suffer wrong,
to help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong;
to give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying, were precious in his sight.

He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth,
and love, joy, hope, like flowers, spring in his path to birth:
before him on the mountains shall peace, the herald, go;
and righteousness in fountains form hill to valley flow.

Hymn 325 – Let us break bread together

Let us break bread together on our knees;
let us break bread together on our knees;
when I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees;
let us drink wine together on our knees;
when I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us praise God together on our knees;
let us praise God together on our knees;
when I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Hymn 541 – Come, labor on, stanzas 1-3

Come, labor on. Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain,
while all around us waves the golden grain?
And to each servant does the Master say, "Go work today."

Come, labor on. The enemy is watching night and day,
to sow the tares, to snatch the seed away;
while we in sleep our duty have forgot, he slumbered not.

Come, labor on. Away with gloomy doubts and faithless fear!
No arm so weak but may do service here:
by feeblest agents may our God fulfill his righteous will.

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, Last Sunday after Pentecost, November 21, 2021.

If we were asked to list our favorite historical figures, Pontius Pilate probably wouldn't be on our list. Not even close. But should he be? That's the question that our lessons raise this morning. Pontius Pilate: good or bad? friend or foe? Divinely intentional or purely an accident of history?

Pilate probably asked himself this question. Indeed, this question is embedded in today's lesson from the Gospel of John (**John 18:33-37**). Pilate's appointed job was to maintain order in the region of the Empire that for the Jews was the Promised Land. As word of Jesus spread and came to Pilate's attention, Pilate asked for a meeting. Better to nip this potential allegiance problem in the bud rather than let it play out.

So, Pilate summons Jesus, and asks him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" If Jesus says yes, he clearly becomes a threat. If he says no, Pilate can get on with his life as governor. Well, the answer Jesus gives Pilate is no answer at all; it's a question. "Did you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?"

Pilate returns the question. "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" To which Jesus responds, "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." A pretty clear reason why Pilate should be concerned. Is Jesus part of the Truth – whatever that is - or is he simply another trouble-maker?

And, if he is just another trouble-maker, what exactly is the trouble? Pilate himself is asking this question. Jesus is getting under Pilate's skin, and, to Pilate's credit, Pilate wants to learn more. He really has no choice. Jesus has the potential to be the peoples' choice, a development that would test Pilate's leadership.

One has to feel at least a little bit for Pilate. Which takes us to you and me twenty centuries later. We feel for Pilate because we have the same ambivalence about Jesus. If he, Jesus, is the One, then we would be foolish to ignore the opportunity to be at one – little o – with the One – capital O. Another way to put this is that Pilate's dilemma is our opportunity.

Yes, we are presented, not with a dilemma, but with an opportunity, namely to see in Jesus the Creator of the Universe in human form – Incarnation. That possibility is a far bigger issue than whether we continue to function as a political figure in the Roman Empire.

Think about your most profound desire as a human being. Measure that desire against having a personal relationship with the Son of God. No longer a desire for power and health and happiness, but a fulfillment of what it means to be human, namely to sit, with Jesus, at the right hand of the Father.

Today's lesson from the Revelation to John (**Revelation 1:4-8**) describes what is at stake. "I am the Alpha and the Omega." In Jesus, Pilate had this choice and declined. You and I have this choice, and here we are. Both Pilate's declination and our acceptance are really tough calls. It was so for Pilate, and it is so for you and me.

Today's Psalm (**Psalm 93**) is a powerful description of what is at stake. "Mightier than the sound of many waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea, mightier is the Lord who dwells on high."

And, who can forget Daniel's vision (**Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14**): "His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed."

Put yourself in Pilate's shoes. The Power of the Empire vs. the "Lord who dwells on high." Isn't this our choice as well? And it's a choice that you and I make time and time again. It's rare that one chooses Lord over Empire just once and forever.

Most of us go through this exercise often in the course of a life-time. But usually – not always, but usually – we settle into a pattern, not only for ourselves, but for those we love. And at the heart of this "pattern" is a growing confidence that, for all the uncertainty of life, there is a constant, and that Constant has a Name: the Love of God.

And the more we settle into that conclusion, the happier we are, the stronger we are, the more forgiving we are, the more hopeful we are, the more genuine we are.

Today's **Collect** includes this sentence: "Mercifully grant that the people of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule." That's our prayer. And the vehicle, we believe, that will insure this outcome is a carpenter from Nazareth named Jesus.

Like Pontius Pilate, we are curious about this person. We know how we have wrestled with whether this carpenter is God's Son. What we don't know is how Pilate finally reconciled his curiosity about Jesus with his political responsibility. Yes, he ordered the Crucifixion. But did he do so in a good conscience? I doubt it. He probably died, wishing that he had reached a more charitable conclusion.

And not just "more charitable," but more "factual." Yes, "factual." What today's Gospel refers to as "truth." "Jesus answered Pilate, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'"

Yes, Pilate was close, but, sadly for him, not close enough. He squandered an opportunity. You and I are here. We are closer, and it sure feels like the Truth with a capital T. Oh yes, we will have more questions, but we won't stop asking. Because, it is in the asking and in the listening and in the believing and in the application of that belief that the Truth comes alive.

Sometimes that Truth seeps into our lives. And sometimes it explodes. However, whenever, the Truth touches us, we should be really thankful. And, not just thankful for ourselves, but prepared to share our thankfulness. Our final hymn today reinforces this responsibility and privilege. "And to each servant does the Master say, 'Go work today.'"

Let's do it. Amen.

Lessons for Last Sunday after Pentecost – November 21, 2021

Collect: Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

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

Psalm 93

The Lord is King; he has put on splendid apparel;

the Lord has put on his apparel and girded himself with strength.

He has made the whole world so sure

that it cannot be moved;

Ever since the world began, your throne has been established;

you are from everlasting.

The waters have lifted up, O Lord, the waters have lifted up their voice;

the waters have lifted up their pounding waves.

Mightier than the sound of many waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea,

mightier is the Lord who dwells on high.

Our testimonies are very sure,

and holiness adorns your house, O Lord, for ever and for evermore.

Second Reading: Revelation 1:4-8

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

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

Gospel: John 18:33-37

Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

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