

*St. Christopher by the Sea
Gibson Island*

24th Sunday of Pentecost, November 7, 2021
Holy Communion, Rite II

Ministry of the Word

Hymn 493, stanzas 1-4 ***O for a thousand tongues***

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Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen

Collect for Purity 355

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Collect for Pentecost 24 Insert

First Reading: I Kings 17:8-16 Insert

Psalm 146 Insert

Second Reading: Hebrews 9:24-28 Insert

Hymn 460, stanzas 1-2 ***Alleluia! sing to Jesus***

Gospel: Mark 12:38-44 Insert

The Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

.....

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Sermon The Rev. Charles Rowins

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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*

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Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

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Blessing

Hymn 688, stanzas 1-3 *A mighty fortress is our God*

Dismissal

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

Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Hymns for 24th Sunday after Pentecost – November 7, 2021

Hymn 493, stanzas 1-4

O for a thousand tongues

O for a thousand tongues to sing my dear Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace!

My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim
and spread through all the earth abroad the honors of thy Name.

Jesus! the Name that charms our fears and bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life and health and peace.

He speaks; and, listening to his voice, new life the dead receive,
the mournful broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.

Hymn 460, stanzas 1-2

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!

Alleluia! sing to Jesus! his the scepter, his the throne;
Alleluia! his the triumph, his the victory alone;
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation hath redeemed us by his blood.

Alleluia! not as orphans are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia! he is near us, faith believes, nor questions how:
though the cloud from sight received him, when the forty days were o'er,
shall our hearts forget his promise, "I am with you evermore"?

Hymn 688, stanzas 1-3

A mighty fortress is our God

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
for still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
were not the right man on our side, this man of God's own choosing;
dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabbaoth his Name, from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us;
we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us;
the prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure,
one little word shall fell him.

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 24th Sunday after Pentecost, November 7, 2021.

Every Sunday, when we dismiss, we say “hallelujah!” four times. Two from the minister, and two from the congregation. “Hallelujah” means, in the words of today’s Psalm, “Praise the Lord, O my soul!”

We use “Hallelujah” to say “Thank you, Lord” for all sorts of things. From the opportunity to “gather in church” to a “clean bill of health” to an ump’s call “you’re safe” instead of “you’re out.”

Now, “Hallelujah” is a pretty easy response to make when we’re “safe.” It’s a more challenging response to make when we’re “not safe,” or at least when we think that we’re not safe.

And it’s right here – in this comparison between “pretty easy” and “not so easy” – that we find ourselves, as we build and/or sustain our faith.

Today’s second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews (**Hebrews 9:28**) is really positive. “So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

Are we “eagerly waiting,” or are we perhaps “a little concerned”? Concerned that the promise of “you’re safe” might be “off base.” Proclaiming “Hallelujah!” even one time, much less four times, might be wishful thinking.

In today’s first lesson (**I Kings 17:8-16**), the widow was concerned that Elijah’s request for a morsel of bread might compromise the meal she was preparing for her son. Elijah assures her that all will be well. And all was well. “The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail.”

In today’s gospel lesson (**Mark 12:38-44**), Jesus notes that the offering of the poor widow was as important as the much larger offerings that others were making.

The message of both lessons is that whatever the opportunity presented to us to demonstrate our faith, we need to seize that opportunity with a “Hallelujah” and mean it. Even when sometimes it’s not easy to see a positive outcome.

We tend to view “Hallelujah” as an option for a clearly positive situation rather than faith that we bring to every situation, including those that appear bleak. Christians are sometimes called “Hallelujah” people. People who have a positive outlook on life even when things are not going as we hoped. People should know us by our Hallelujah demeanor, especially when faced with an outcome that we desperately want to avoid.

Today’s **Collect** uses the phrase “having this hope.” We are people of hope. And that hope trumps all sorts of conditions. By definition, a widow or widower is one who has lost a loved one, a partner. The widow or widower has a choice at the point of loss. It’s the choice between “you’re out” and “you’re in God’s hand.”

Imagine being without hope. It’s the opposite of today’s Psalm (**Psalm 146:7**): “The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down Hallelujah!” Here’s the short version: “You’re safe!”

Now, that level of faith is high. And we don’t get to it without the help of others. And among the most influential of those “others” are people just like you and me. Subject to all the unknowns and all the disappointments and all the loss that life brings, yet able to appreciate the possibility – no, the probability – no, the promise - that there is Divine love that is more powerful than the un-love that seems at times to dominate.

There is a great struggle between Good and Evil. It is a struggle that every human society has recognized and confronted in a variety of ways, including the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. From today’s lesson from Hebrews (**Hebrews 9:28**): “And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

Sometimes that positive conviction comes easily, and sometimes that conviction struggles. There is always work involved. There is always trust involved. There is always faith involved. That's why we gather. We support one another, so that we can help support others. It's tough to do faith alone. Not impossible, but tough. That's why you and I are important to one another and to the larger society.

Can you picture a society without a "Hallelujah" component? Without a conviction that "we're safe", not "out." That would be a dreadful state of affairs. This is what Jesus confronted in today's gospel (**Mark 12:39**). "They devour widows' houses, and for the sake of appearance say long prayers." So, what did Jesus do to address this condition? He died for us and rose for us and continues to be with us.

A "dreadful state of affairs" defeated by a first century carpenter. It's an incredible story. Arguably the "greatest story ever told." Not "out," but "safe."

Just a moment ago, we sang Hymn 460 "Alleluia! sing to to Jesus." All the stanzas are powerful, but none greater than the first:

"Alleluia! sing to Jesus! his the scepter, his the throne;
Alleluia! his the triumph, his the victory alone;
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation hath redeemed us by his blood."

Imagine yourself sliding into home. Is the Creator's decision "You're out" or "You're safe"? My money's on the latter. Our faith is on the latter. God guaranteed the latter in the Resurrection.

Here's to home plate and a forgiving and loving Umpire and a faithful and grateful team. Despite all the odds, we're "SAFE"! Hallelujah!

Amen.

Lessons for Pentecost 24 – November 7, 2021

Collect: O God, whose blessed Son came into the world that he might destroy the works of the devil and make us children of God and heirs of eternal life: Grant that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that, when he comes again with power and great glory, we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: I Kings 17:8-16

The Word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, “Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.” As she was going to bring it, he called to her said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” But she said, “As he Lord our God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.” Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth.” She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.

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

Psalm 146

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Put not your trust in rulers, nor in any child of earth,
for there is no help in them.

When they breathe their last, they return to earth,
and in that day their thoughts perish.

Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help!
whose hope is in the Lord their God;

Who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;
 who keeps his promise for ever;
Who gives justice to those who are oppressed,
 and food to those who hunger.
The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind;
 the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
The Lord loves the righteous; the Lord cares for the stranger;
 he sustains the orphans and widows, but frustrates the way of the wicked.
The Lord shall reign forever,
 your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Hebrews 9:24-28

Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

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

Gospel: Mark 12:38-44

As Jesus taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

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