

St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland
16th Sunday of Pentecost, September 12, 2021

Welcome and Introduction – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Hymn 432, stanzas 1-2

O praise ye the Lord

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 116:1-8 – see lesson insert

First Lesson – Isaiah 50:4-9a - see lesson insert

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

Second Reading – James 3:1-12 - see lesson insert

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

Hymn 371, stanzas 1 and 3

Thou, whose almighty word

The Gospel - Mark 8:27-38 – see insert

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, 16th Sunday after Pentecost, and Divine Protection

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.*

O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Assist us mercifully, O Lord, in these our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of your servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation; that, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, we may ever be defended by your gracious and ready help; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *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 435, stanzas 1 and 6

At the Name of Jesus

Dismissal

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

Hymns for 16th Sunday after Pentecost – September 12, 2021

Hymn 432, stanzas 1-2

O praise ye the Lord

O praise ye the Lord! Praise him in the height;
rejoice in his word, ye angels of light;
ye heavens, adore him by whom ye were made,
and worship before him, in brightness arrayed.

O praise ye the Lord! Praise him jupon earth,
in tuneful accord, all ye of new birth;
praise him who hath brought you his grace from above,
praise him who hath taught you to sing of his love.

Hymn 371, stanzas 1 and 3

Thou, whose almighty word

Thou, whose almighty word chaos and darkness heard, and took their flight;
hear us, we humbly pray, and, where the Gospel day sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love, life-giving, holy Dove, speed forth thy flight!
Move on the waters' face bearing the gifts of grace, and in earth's darkest place,
let there be light!

Hymn 435, stanzas 1 and 6

At the Name of Jesus

At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him King of glory now;
'tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Christians, this Lord Jesus shall return again,
with his Father's glory o'er the earth to reign;
for all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him King of glory now.

Lessons for 16th Sunday after Pentecost – September 12, 2021

Collect: O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-19a

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens – wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

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

Psalm 116:1-8

I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication,
because he has inclined his ear to me whenever I called upon him.
The cords of death entangled me; the grip of the grave took hold of me;
I came to grief and sorrow.
Then I called upon the Name of the Lord:
“O Lord, I pray you, save my life.”
Gracious is the Lord and righteous;
Our God is full of compassion.
The Lord watches over the innocent;
I was brought very low, and he helped me.

Turn again to your rest, O my soul,
for the Lord has treated you well.

For you have rescued my life from death,
my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling.
I will walk in the presence of the Lord;
in the land of the living.

Second Reading: James 3:1-7

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue – restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water.? Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs.? No more can salt water yield fresh.

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

Gospel: Mark 8:27-38

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world, and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

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

**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea,
Gibson Island, Maryland, 16th Sunday after Pentecost, September 12, 2021.**

Throughout this Season of Pentecost, we have seen Jesus teach and we have seen him heal. We have seen him stand up to authorities and support those who are down-trodden. We have some reports about the early years of Jesus, but we have many more about his adult years.

And what we know about this remarkable man, who just might be the Son of God, is inviting. It's not easy to ignore him, much less to dismiss him. He demands a more thoughtful response. And respond, we have. But in very different ways. We have shifted back and forth from "yes, I believe," to "impressive but I'm not there yet," to "I don't think so," to "I'm so confused."

Well, whatever the nature of these shifting positions, there comes a time when we want to pick one and stick with it, at least for awhile. Give him a chance. Give us a chance. But in the end, for our own mental health, we have to decide.

Deciding is our responsibility, but it is also our privilege. Imagine not having a choice. Imagine being told what to believe or else. Imagine not being free.

You and I are free when it comes to deciding how we feel about Jesus. And it's possible, no probable, that our response will change from time to time, incident to incident. What doesn't change is that we own the decision about Jesus. It is ours. None of us is here this morning, I trust, because someone made us attend, made us believe in a certain way, made us profess publicly a faith that wasn't real.

No, we're here of our own accord. And guess who else is here? It is the Risen Christ. And just as he engaged his disciples about their belief, the Risen Christ engages us about our belief. And Jesus isn't talking about what others say about him. Jesus is asking us, individually, about how we feel about him.

As it was for the disciples, such a moment is seminal. A "seminal moment" is huge. It is defining. It alters. It sets in motion. It makes a difference. "Seminal" means "seed." A seminal moment leads to growth. It brings to life.

We see in the case of Jesus a seminal moment in today's gospel (**Mark 8:27-29**). "I don't care what others are saying about me. I want to know what you are saying about me. And not just saying about me, but to me." Jesus asks, "But who

do you – fill in your name - say that I am?” Peter, for one, answered, “You are the Messiah.”

The great books and the great movies and the great compositions and the great whatever all have a pivotal moment. That’s why they’re great. We remember these moments, because we were changed. A seed was planted and we grew.

Peter had many encounters with Jesus. Some, maybe many, were pivotal, but few, maybe only one, were seminal. Just because we pivot doesn’t mean that we follow. In this lesson, Peter follows. “You are the Messiah.”

Some of you, I suspect, have had such a moment. It’s why you’re here. Others, I suspect, haven’t had a such a moment. Well guess what. That’s also why you are here.

This fellow Jesus is tough to ignore, even when we are determined for whatever reason to do so. One of the reasons perhaps people stop coming to church is because they are not comfortable with the words “But who do you say that I am?”

Even people, maybe especially people who are adamant about Jesus of Nazareth not being the Messiah, have a lingering question. “What if he is the Messiah? What if I am wrong? What might I be missing?”

What if Peter had responded to Jesus “No, I love you, brother, but you are not the Messiah. Get over it. And don’t ask me again.” And what if Jesus had responded, “Okay, Peter, I won’t ask you again. But don’t be surprised if you ask yourself if I am the Messiah.”

And, this of course, is what you and I do, isn’t it? We go back and forth with Jesus. For some, the swing is small. For others, the swing is large. Another way of putting this is that there is always some belief and some doubt. Rarely, I suspect, is there either total belief – what Isaiah (**Isaiah 50:7**) calls “setting my face like flint” - or total doubt.

We know folks in each of the extreme camps. These are the camps of unbridled faith and unbridled doubt. We don’t know for sure if Jesus is the Messiah. And we don’t know for sure if a Messiah is even a possibility.

The possibility of God expressing Himself most completely in the birth, life, death and resurrection of a first century carpenter is the subject of today's lesson from the Epistle to James (**James 3:1-12**). A small bit in the mouth of a horse can direct a horse. A small rudder in a large ship can direct the ship. A small tongue can do great things, both good and bad. But the notion of something small, like a first century carpenter, having the power to change history seems a stretch. Yet, here we are, stretching.

Both as a congregation and as individuals, we are probably not 100% sure that Jesus is the Messiah, but we're certainly leaning in that direction. "We feel good about the direction, because we feel good about you, Jesus, and the God you represent. Yes, we go back and forth in our belief, but, by golly, we love the direction that you represent. We love who you are."

To varying degrees, we are like Peter. "You are the Messiah." But look at how Jesus responds to Peter. "Tell no one about me." But here we are, talking about Jesus. Are we disobeying by sharing our faith? No, because we are on the other side, this side, of the crucifixion and resurrection.

Initially the disciples weren't ready for the truth. But centuries later we are ready. And, yes, more than ready. From today's Psalm (**Psalm 116:8**): "I will walk in the presence of the Lord." And, as we walk, we tell people about Jesus. And we are doing so with varying degrees of certainty. From "Yes, I believe" to "Yes, I think so," to "I'm not sure, but I want to learn more."

Put all those different stages of belief together, and what do you get? You get St. Christopher-by-the-Sea and every other Jesus-centered community. And it sure feels right. It sure feels true. It sure feels that we are inching our way to saying with deep thanks, individually and collectively "Yes, Jesus, you are the Messiah."

From our final hymn today this wonderful line: "... thou, who almighty art, now rule in every heart, and ne'er from us depart, Spirit of power."

Are you the Messiah, Jesus? We think so. We believe so. We're going to lead our lives as if it is so. And what's really a bonus, we are not alone. And we're pretty sure that this is what you want to hear. In your Name, Jesus, we offer our thanks to you and our faith to others. *Amen.*

