

Worship Service
17th Sunday after Pentecost – September 19, 2021
St. Christopher-by-the-Sea
Gibson Island, Maryland

Introduction – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Hymn 632, stanzas 1-2

O Christ, the Word Incarnate

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 17th Sunday after Pentecost

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Grant us, O Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Wisdom of Solomon 1:16-2:1, 12-22 – see lesson insert

Psalm 54 – see lesson insert

Second Reading: James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a – see lesson insert

Hymn 631, stanzas 1 and 3

Book of books

Gospel: Mark 9:30-37 – 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 401, stanzas 1 and 3

The God of Abraham praise

Dismissal

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

`Hymns for 17th Sunday after Pentecost – September 19, 2021

Hymn 632, stanzas 1-2

O Christ, the Word Incarnate

O Christ, the Word Incarnate, O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth, unchanged, unchanging, O light of our dark sky;
we praise thee for the radiance that from the scripture's page,
a lantern to our footsteps, shines on from age to age.

The Church from our dear Master received the word divine,
and still that light is lifted o'er all the earth to shine.
It is the chart and compass that o'er life's surging sea,
mid mists and rocks and quicksands, still guides, O Christ, to thee.

Hymn 631, stanzas 1 and 3

Book of Books

Book of books, our people's strength, statesman's, teacher's, hero's treasure,
bringing freedom, spreading truth, shedding light that none can measure:
wisdom comes to those who know thee, all the best we have we owe thee.

Praise we God, who hath inspired those whose wisdom still directs us;
Praise him for the Word made flesh, for the Spirit which protects us.
Light of knowledge, ever burning, shed on us thy deathless learning.

Hymn 401, stanzas 1 and 3

The God of Abraham praise

The God of Abraham praise, who reigns enthroned above;
Ancient of everlasting days, and God of love;
the Lord, the great I AM, by earth and heaven confessed:
we bow and bless the sacred Name for ever blest.

There dwells the Lord, our King, the Lord, our Righteousness,
triumphant o'er the world and sin, the Prince of Peace;
on Zion's sacred height his kingdom he maintains,
and, glorious with his saints in light, for ever reigns.

Lessons for 17th Sunday after Pentecost – September 19, 2021

Collect: Grant us, O Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to cleave to those that shall abide; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Lesson: Wisdom of Solomon 1:16-2:1, 12-22

The ungodly by their words and deeds summoned death; considering him a friend, they pined away and made a covenant with him, because they are fit to belong to his company. For they reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves, "Short and sorrowful is our life, and there is no remedy when a life comes to its end, and no one has been known to return from Hades. Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training. He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange. We are considered by him as something base and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father. Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God's child, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. Let us test him with insult and torture, so that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected." Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them, and they did not know the secret purposes of God, nor hoped for the wages of holiness, nor discerned the prize for blameless souls.

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

Psalm 54

Save me, O God, by our Name;

in your might, defend my cause.

Hear my prayer, O God;

give ear to the words of my mouth.

For the arrogant have risen up against me, and the ruthless have sought my life,

those who have no regard for God.

Behold, God is my helper;

it is the Lord who sustains my life.

Render evil to those who spy on me;

in your faithfulness, destroy them.

I will offer you a freewill sacrifice

and praise your Name, O Lord, for it is good.

For you have rescued me from every trouble,

and my eye has seen the ruin of my foes.

Second Lesson: James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a

Who is wise, and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you?? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to god, and he will draw near to you.

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

Gospel: Mark 9:30-37

Jesus and his disciples passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him. Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way!" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.

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, 17th Sunday after Pentecost, September 19, 2021.

I want us this morning to think about the Bible as a library, because that is what the Bible is. It's a collection of books with many authors over many centuries. There is an overall theme, namely that God is Alpha and Omega and everything in between. Or, what our opening hymn today described as "a lantern to our footsteps."

This lantern, this collection of books, is organized into three large categories. But within these three large categories are dozens of separate books with separate authors and separate sub-themes.

Well, what are the three large categories? There is the Old Testament. There is the New Testament. And there is a collection of books that don't fall conveniently into either the Old or New Testament. This third collection is called the Apocrypha, which means "hidden."

So, picture the library building. There are three large rooms. The largest is for the Old Testament books. The second largest is for the New Testament books. And the third room is for all the books that don't seem to belong in the first two rooms, but which reinforce the theme of God's saving intervention in human affairs.

The books in the Apocrypha room are well worth reading, but fall outside the traditional boundaries of the Old and New Testaments. The Apocrypha books are different. In fact, some libraries don't even have a third room. They don't carry the Books of the Apocrypha, or, if they do, they assign these books to one of the two big rooms, not to a third room.

Well, the good news for you and me is that our library card allows for entrance into all three rooms. Most of our attention is split between the Old and New Testaments, but every now and then we venture into the Apocrypha. Today is one of those days.

Our first reading is from the Wisdom of Solomon (**Wisdom 1:16-2:1, 12-22**), sometimes known as The Book of Wisdom. Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba. He succeeded David as King. He is noted for his judgment, particularly in the case of two women who claimed to be the mother of the same

child. Solomon ruled in favor of the woman who was willing to give up her child rather than see the child divided in half.

The graphic nature of this story explains perhaps while the editors of the Bible decided to place the book in the Apocrypha room of our library.

Now, today's Apocrypha lesson does not deal with two women claiming to be mother of the same child. Rather the lesson foretells the struggle of Jesus with the authorities. "Let us condemn him to a shameful death – can you say crucifixion – for, according to what he says, he will be protected." And, of course, Jesus was protected, even unto death. The author notes "their wickedness blinded them, and they did not know the secret purposes of God."

Now, note from the insert that for our first lesson we could have read a passage from the Prophet Jeremiah, a more familiar source than the Book of Wisdom. But had we read from Jeremiah the sentiment would have been the same. "But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter." Again, can you say crucifixion.

At any rate, we elected to read from the Book of Wisdom located in the Apocrypha room of our library. It's good to move around in our library. Not all the time, but every now and then. Again, all the books from all three rooms of the library are worth our attention.

Our second lesson today is from the Letter of James (**James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a**). Now, James was the brother of Jesus, so anything that James had to say should be of interest to you and me. Brothers can have a very different take than people outside the family. This particular passage is not about Jesus as a brother, but about the wisdom this brother embodied. "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy."

I have an older brother, and, by definition, he has a younger brother. Neither of us would have written this about the other. But, perhaps we both should have written this about humankind in general. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." Pretty good brotherly advice. So good in fact, that the passage deserves a place in the New Testament wing our library.

One more lesson. The Gospel of Mark (**Mark 9:30-37**). This passage is clearly about Jesus and the disciples of Jesus. It definitely belongs in the New Testament wing of our library. It is a profound description of how you and I should behave, given the freedom that God had provided. "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Jesus calls you and me to "servant-hood."

And, to drive home this message, Jesus takes a child in his arms and says, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the One who sent me."

You and I spend our whole lives trying to do the right thing, and, given the freedom that we have been provided, our efforts are all over the place. The "right thing" for one person might not be the right thing for another person. And that's okay, assuming that both persons are trying to do the right thing. God will take our best efforts and use them to accomplish His Will.

That in fact is the theme of our whole library. It might well be inscribed over the library's entrance. Each of us is unique. Each of us has different gifts. Each of us has different opportunities. And each of us doesn't have to worry about how all of these different gifts express themselves and work together for the common good. God will take all of these individual contributions and make something good out of them.

We have to believe that. Yes, we have responsibilities for putting all these efforts together, but so does God. We might not recognize God's role in all of the turmoil the Creation experiences at any given time. But we do have to trust that God is in charge somehow, some way. Maybe this is the inscription as we exit our library.

Today's Collect expresses this faith very well. "Grant us, O Lord, not to mind earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to cleave to those that shall abide."

Now, this sentence is too long as an inscription for the library entrance and/or exit. But today's Psalm (**Psalm 54**) suggests an alternative. Shorter and to the point: "I will offer you a freewill sacrifice and praise your Name, O Lord, for it is good." The even shorter version is "It is good."

Yes. "It is good." That will do. Thank you, Lord. *Amen.*

