

**Worship Service**  
**15th Sunday after Pentecost – September 5, 2021**  
**St. Christopher-by-the-Sea**  
**Gibson Island, Maryland**

**Introduction** – The Rev. Charles Rowins

**Hymn 569, stanzas 1-2**

*God the Omnipotent!*

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 15th Sunday after Pentecost**

The Lord be with you.

*And also with you.*

Let us pray.

Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and fore ver. *Amen.*

**First Reading:** Isaiah 35:4-7a – see lesson insert

**Psalm 146** – see lesson insert

**Second Reading: James 2:1-17**

**Hymn 267, stanzas 1-2**

*Praise we the Lord this day*

**Gospel:** Mark 7:24-37 – 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 541, stanzas 2 and 5**

*Come, labor on*

## **Dismissal**

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

## Hymns for 15 Pentecost – September 5, 2021

### Hymn 569, stanzas 1-2

### *God the Omnipotent*

God the Omnipotent! King, who ordainest  
thunder thy clarion, the lightning thy sword;  
show forth thy pity on high where thou reignest:  
give to us peace in our time, O Lord.

God the all merciful! earth hath forsaken  
thy ways all holy, and slighted thy word;  
bid not thy wrath in its terrors awaken:  
give to us peace in our time, O Lord.

### Hymn 267, stanzas 1-2

### *Praise we the Lord this day*

Praise we the Lord this day, this day so long foretold,  
whose promise shone with cheering ray on waiting saints of old.

The prophet gave the sign for faithful folks to read:  
a virgin born of David's line shall bear the promised seed.

### Hymn 541, stanzas 2 and 5

### *Come, labor on*

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. No time for rest, till glows the western sky,  
till the long shadows o'er our pathway lie,  
and a glad sound comes with the setting sun, "Servants, well done."

**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, September 5, 2021).**

From today's lesson from the Prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 35:4**): "Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear!' Here is your God. He will come with vengeance. With terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

Like so much of Scripture, this passage makes us think. Consider the bookends: "be strong, do not fear" and "he will come and save you." These phrases are reassuring in the extreme. What's to fear? God will save us. Relax. But between the bookends are these thoughts: "Your God will come with vengeance and with terrible recompense."

"Recompense" is a word that we don't use often. It means "compensation for an injury." But what is the injury for which you and I are being compensated? Where have we been hurt? Why does God have to intervene on our behalf?

Think about it. When is it that you and I get in trouble? Well, often you and I get in trouble because we misuse the freedom that God has given us. We love being free people, and we understand that with this gift, there is the expectation that we will use the gift always as God intends.

But sometimes we don't. Sometimes we misuse the gift of freedom, often in minor ways, but occasionally in major ways. And over a lifetime, this misuse reality weighs on us. And sometimes that weight is more than we can bear.

We try on our own to get over it, but that self-help approach doesn't work. And it is at this point that the God who set the bar really high steps in and offers us a remedy. "He will come and save you." God won't lower the high bar. Rather, God will enable us to clear the high bar. God does for us in Christ what we cannot do on our own.

My hunch is that each of us has had the experience of going into an empty church, falling on our knees, and asking God for forgiveness. We have done this when forgiveness seemed out of reach through our own effort. We know that we need someone to listen and help us move on.

Now, wait just a minute, you say. God gives us a challenge and God gives us the freedom to pursue the challenge. And when our pursuit is inadequate, God steps in and saves us. Is that what Isaiah is saying?

Yes, that is exactly what Isaiah is saying. “Be strong and do not fear ..... God will come and save you.” This is also the sentiment of today’s Psalm (**Psalm 146:10**): “The Lord shall reign for ever ...” The Letter of James has a shorter version (**James 2:13**): “Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

So, where does the “He will come with vengeance” come into play? Well, it comes into play because there is nothing to say that God has to save. There is nothing to say that God will help us clear the bar.

We’re in trouble if the Lord chooses not to intervene on our behalf. The Lord has the power to withhold forgiveness. It’s that withholding option that is the vengeance that Isaiah talks about. God can come down hard, or God can forgive. Given those options, you and I should be shaking in our boots. The more we realize that forgiveness is not automatic, the more grateful we should be when that forgiveness is granted.

The grounder we can’t field, the fly ball we can’t reach, the accurate throw we can’t make, the pitch we can’t hit – none of these shortcomings is the end of the story. God has a different ending in mind, and God executes that different ending in Jesus. That’s why we can be strong and not fear.

Today’s passage from Mark’s gospel (**Mark 7:24-37**) is a very touching illustration of the healing power of Jesus. But the healing power of Jesus is but one element of the story. The other element is the faith of the mother. She had heard about Jesus and took a chance that Jesus could help her daughter. He was under no obligation to do so, but the mom persisted. For her, this was the equivalent of going into that empty church that you and I perhaps have experienced and asking the Lord to intervene, to save, to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

In the same passage, there is the story of a deaf man with a speech impediment. Jesus touches the man and the man’s tongue is released. “He spoke plainly.” Jesus did for the man what the man could not do for himself. You and I are in this story.

Yes indeed, there is more to the story. And we see “the more” in this morning’s passage from the Letter of James. This passage is about faith and works. It is about being healed by Jesus – saved if you will – and then thanking Jesus for the restored health.

And how do we say thank you for the restoration? We help restore others. We become conveyors of God’s Love. We do for others what they perhaps cannot do for themselves. It’s the Biblical version of “pay it forward.”

And, as the passage makes clear, we are to “pay it forward” not just for some – those with “gold rings and fine clothes” – but for all. God’s salvation in Christ is not limited. Nor should our thank-you for Christ be limited.

What should drive our thank-you is our rescue. If we don’t have a sense of being saved, it’s pretty hard to convince others that God does save, that God does intervene, and that God can overcome all sorts of things, including death itself.

God can do all these things if God so chooses. It’s the “if” that is key to our faith. And what we believe passionately is that God has made a choice to apply Divine power in a particular way. And that “way” is salvation. And the instrument of that salvation is the birth, life, death and resurrection of a carpenter from Nazareth.

Is this a stretch? Of course it is, but would we expect anything less from the Creator of the Universe? God can do whatever God wants. This is where power resides. The power is awesome. And if God chose to apply that power in a negative manner, God could do so.

But our belief – the reason why we’re here this morning – is that God has applied that power in a really interesting and positive and effective manner. “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.” “But so is Salvation.” And I choose to save, thank you very much.

And now the ball is in our court. We have the power to appreciate that salvation or ignore it, maybe even decline it. Here, in this place, with these friends and neighbors, we’ve made our choice. It is appreciation.

And how do we show that appreciation? We labor in the Lord's vineyard. It's a big vineyard with lots of options for expressing our gratitude. This gratitude is expressed boldly in our final hymn today, "Come, labor on." At our best, at our most thankful, we don't "stand idle." We go to work. In the words of the hymn, we "slumber not." And, when we "slumber not," God proclaims "Servants, well done."

Congratulations! Amen.

## Lessons for 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – September 5, 2021

**Collect:** Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; 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 35:4-7a

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.

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 orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.*  
The Lord shall reign for ever,  
*your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!*

### **Second Reading: James 2:1-17**

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the power. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you. You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors! For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For the one who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

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

**Gospel: Mark 7:24-37**

Jesus set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter." So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

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