

Lessons for Easter 7 - May 29, 2022 – Memorial Day Weekend

Collect for Easter 7 – O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us unto that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

First Reading: Acts 16:16-34

With Paul and Silas, we came to Philippi of Macedonia, a Roman colony, and as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, “These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.” She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, “These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.” The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the inner most cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and every one’s chains were unfastened. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” They spoke the word of the Lord to him

and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them, and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

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

Psalm 97

The Lord is King; let the earth rejoice;

let the multitude of the isles be glad.

Clouds and darkness are round about him

righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne.

A fire goes before him

and burns up his enemies on every side.

His lightnings light up the world;

the earth sees it and is afraid.

The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the Lord,

at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

The heavens declare his righteousness,

and all the peoples see his glory.

Confounded be all who worship carved images and delight in false gods!

Bow down before him, all you gods.

Zion hears and is glad, and the cities of Judah rejoice,

because of your judgments, O Lord.

For you are the Lord, most high over all the earth;

you are exalted far above all gods.

The Lord loves those who hate evil;

he preserves the lives of his saints and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

Light has sprung up for the righteous,

and joyful gladness for those who are truehearted.

Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous,

and give thanks to his holy Name.

Second Reading: Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21

“See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.” It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let everyone who hears say, “Come.” And let every one who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. The one who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

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

Gospel: John 17:20-26

Jesus prayed for his disciples, and then he said, “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

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

**Sermon preached at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, by
The Rev. Charles Rowins, on May 29, 2022, Easter 7 and Memorial Day
Weekend.**

Memorial Day Weekend, always a special occasion, particularly for this Island Community and its record of tradition of national service of all sorts.

In particular, it's a time to remember and give thanks for those who died defending our nation. And it's also a time to remember those who lost a son or daughter or mom or dad in the service of the nation.

As we honor those who sacrificed, we also remember those dealing with the loss of loved ones. For every hero in battle, there are heroes back home, making adjustments and carrying on with grateful but sad hearts.

The sadness is always heavy, but it is particularly so this weekend because of the loss of life at a school site. The "memorial" in Memorial Day knows no boundaries.

But the "memorial" in Memorial Day also means a new set of heroes, including people who support survivors. Friends, neighbors, strangers, congregations, who do what they can to honor sacrifice and sustain spirits. Uniform or not.

In short, there's a role for all of us. This role is the centerpiece of this morning's Collect. Here it is: "Do not leave us comfortless." Which leads to these important questions: "What can we do to provide comfort?" How can we honor? How can we support? How can we help lift up the spirits of those who are hurting?

Our first reading this morning – the passage from Acts (**Acts 16:16-34**) – is intriguing. Paul and Silas do a good deed. They order an evil spirit to leave a fortune-teller. The spirit responds and leaves. This act of kindness angers those who were making money off of the fortune-teller. The result is harsh punishment for Paul and Silas. In captivity, they maintain their faith by praying and singing.

Their faithfulness not only supported the other prisoners, it triggered an earthquake and the unfastening of chains. The guard, fearing a reprimand for

allowing a prison break, was about to kill himself. After all, he would be blamed. But Paul and Silas and the others said, “We’re not leaving. We’re all here.” The guard, duly impressed by this act of love, asked what he needed to do to be saved. The response from Paul and Silas was “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

What is the application of today’s lessons to Memorial Day? There are several.

There is the element of **self-sacrifice**. When you serve, you agree to a lot, including putting your life on the line. And service comes in many forms, abroad and at home.

There is the element of **courage**, knowing that sacrifice carries a cost, and it could be the cost of one’s life.

And there’s the element of **trust**. Will the sacrifice make a difference? A huge part of faith in God is trusting that there is a God, who not only listens, but responds. When we pray “Our Father” we are counting on being heard by the Creator of the Universe.

Now, just how the Creator handles our prayer is well above our pay-grade, but that there is a Creator who listens is a given in our faith.

At most of our worship services we recite a psalm. The language of the Psalms is a language of profound trust. From this morning’s Psalm (**Psalm 97**): “For you are the Lord, most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.”

Today’s lesson from Revelation (**Revelation 22:14, 16-17, 20-21**) also is full of trust and confidence. “Alpha and Omega, first and last, beginning and end.”

Not a hint of doubt. Which is a pretty good description of the thanksgiving and pride and hope and honor that is Memorial Day. The “comfort” that we are pledged, by our baptism, to offer to those individuals and families who have lost loved ones is grounded in our trust and confidence.

We aren’t angry when it comes to Memorial Day. We aren’t in denial about the pain that goes with the loss of loved ones and neighbors. No, our energy goes

into providing comfort. We take seriously the command embedded in today's **Collect**: "Do not leave us comfortless."

And it's not just a command. It's a privilege. It's a form of national service in itself. It's our way of giving thanks for the extreme service that others have provided and for which many have given their lives.

In a sense, Memorial Day is more than a national day of remembrance. It's a day of **service** of all sorts. Service offered in the extreme, and comfort provided those who have lost loved ones. "Do not leave us comfortless." Jesus didn't. And we don't.

Oh yes, sometimes we misuse freedom, and people suffer. But, thankfully, most of the time we use that same freedom to address suffering, to provide comfort in all sorts of ways, to assist those who fight for righteous causes, to be the kind of people our Lord wants us to be. And always in the Lord's company.

Let's add one more element to our Memorial Day observance. Self-sacrifice, courage, trust, and **privilege**.

It's an honor, isn't it, to be commanded by the Lord not to leave any one comfortless? He has given us a job. He has appointed us to provide some relief. It's our responsibility now. It's our privilege.

We know from our own setbacks and losses just how valuable it is to be comforted. And we know how important it is to offer comfort. From John's Gospel (**John 17:20-26**): "Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."

You know the phrase "Back at you." You receive a positive comment from one whom you admire, and in thanksgiving you respond "Back at you." It's a conversation. And it's a great feeling.

And it's a feeling often experienced at a Memorial Garden. There's a conversation of sorts. Two parties, if you will, grounded in love and thanksgiving.

If no one is around, we might actually speak aloud to the person being remembered. And when we do that, we sometimes get the feeling that the other person hears us and responds with “Back at you.”

And, if this isn’t mysterious enough, sometimes we hear the other person initiating the conversation, to which we respond aloud “Back at you.”

Yes, Memorial Day is a heavy day in many ways. But it is also a proud and grateful day. To those who have sacrificed for us and to those who comfort those who experience loss, we say thank you.

And at the head of this list of people to remember is the One who gave his life for us. To which we proudly say, “Back at you, Lord.” It’s the Memorial Garden equivalent of – you guessed it - “Amen.”

**Seventh Sunday of Easter Service – Memorial Day Weekend
May 29, 2022**

Prelude

Hymn 718 – God of our fathers

God of our fathers, whose almighty hand
leads forth in beauty all the starry band
of shining worlds in splendor through the skies,
our grateful songs before thy throne arise.

Thy love divine hath led us in the past,
in this free land by thee our lot is cast;
be thou our ruler, guardian, guide, and stay,
thy word our law, thy paths our chosen way.

From war's alarms, from deadly pestilence,
be thy strong arm our ever sure defense;
thy true religion in our hearts increase,
thy bounteous goodness nourish us in peace.

Refresh thy people on their toilsome way,
lead us from night to never-ending day;
fill all our lives with love and grace divine,
And glory, laud, and praise be ever thine.

Opening sentence - BCP page 40

This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Invitation to Confession – BCP page 41

So that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship Almighty God, let us, with penitent and obedient hearts, confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

Confession – BCP pages 41-42

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 – BCP page 42

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.*

Gloria – BCP page 42

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.

Venite – BCP page 44

Come, let us sing to 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 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 people with his truth.

Psalm 97 – insert

First Reading: Acts 16:16-34 – insert

Second Reading: Revelation 22:14, 16-17, 20-21 – insert

Hymn 716

God bless our native land

God bless our native land; firm may she ever stand through storm and night:
When the wild tempests rave, ruler of wind and wave,
Do thou our country save by thy great might.

For her our prayers shall rise to God, above the skies; on him we wait;
thou who art ever nigh, guarding with watchful eye,
to thee aloud we cry, God save the state!

Gospel Lesson: John 17:20-26 - insert

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Apostles' Creed – pp 53-54

*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.*

Lord's Prayer

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

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 A – page 55

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.

Collect for Easter 7 – insert

O God, the King of glory, who hast exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us not comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

Prayers for Sunday and Memorial Day

O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Dear Lord, we remember before you with grateful hearts the men and women who have given their lives in the service of the nation, as well all those who have served and are serving with honor. Grant that we may continue to honor and extend the freedoms our nation enjoys, and support those nations who defend their freedom. We ask your blessing as well on those entrusted with leadership at home and abroad. Help us all never to take freedom for granted and to step when that freedom is threatened. In your Son's Name we pray. *Amen.*

General Thanksgiving - BCP pp 58-59

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 ourselves 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*

Prayer of St. Chrysostom – BCP, p 59

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 – BCP, p 59

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 719 – O beautiful for spacious skies

O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain,
for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plane!
America! America! God shed his grace on thee,
and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife,
who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life!
America! America! God mend thine every flaw,
confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law.

O beautiful for patriot dream that sees beyond the years
thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears!
American! America! God shed his grace on thee,
and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

Dismissal

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

Postlude