

Lessons for 4th Sunday after Pentecost – Independence Day Weekend

Collect for Pentecost 4: O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for Independence Day: Almighty God, who has given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech you that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of your favor and glad to do your will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness and in the day of trouble, do not allow our trust in you to fail; all this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

First Reading: Isaiah 66:10-14

Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her – that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breasts; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom. For thus says the Lord: I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bodies shall flourish like the grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the Lord is with his servants, and his indignation is against his enemies.

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

Psalm 66:1-8

Be joyful in God, all you lands;

sing the glory of his Name; sing the glory of his praise.

Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!

because of your great strength your enemies cringe before you.

All the earth bows down before you,
sings to you, sings out your Name.
Come now and see the works of God,
how wonderful he is in his doing toward all people.
He turned the sea into dry land, so that they went through the water on foot,
and there we rejoiced in him.
In his might he rules for ever; his eyes keep watch over the nations;
let no rebel rise up against him.
Bless our God, you peoples;
make the voice of his praise to be heard;
Who holds our souls in life,
and will not allow our feet to slip.

Second Reading: Galatians 6:1-16

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in his way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads. Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher. Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised – only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those will follow this rule – peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

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

Gospel: Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send our laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town, and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.' Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me." The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

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, 4th Sunday of Pentecost, July 3, 2022.

This weekend we observe our nation's independence. It's a traditional holiday grounded in the sacrifices of many, abroad and at home. We associate this day with victory in conflict, tempered by loss of loved ones. The images and memories associated with this weekend are powerful. They make us proud, to be sure, but also sad that a fight for independence always comes at a cost.

As I read the lessons appointed for this 4th Sunday in the Season of Pentecost, my first reaction was "Where's the fit?" But, the more I thought about it, there is an important connection.

The theme of the Isaiah passage (**Isaiah 66:10-14**) is comfort in the midst of uncertainty. Israel as a nation has always been caught in the middle of regional unrest. So it was in the time of Isaiah. Others competed for regional prominence. Israel tried to protect itself. The people were continually in need of comfort. The Lord was the source of this comfort. "I, the Lord, will extend prosperity like a river ... I will carry you, Israel, on my arm, and dandle you on my knees. You will okay."

This sense of comfort in the midst of pain remains central to the Jewish experience. And it's not just comfort, it's joy. From today's Psalm (**Psalm 66:7-8**): "Bless our God who holds our souls in life, and will not allow our feet to slip."

This is the experience also of our nation. We've come through a lot of trials, and we're going through some right now, both external and internal. It would be easy to throw up our arms in disgust and disbelief and dis... everything. But we don't.

We carry on, in large part because we feel that we are in the company of a God who expects peace from his special creature and provides comfort when that peace elusive. When we are called to sacrifice, we do so in the belief that sacrifice is what God expects of his special creature. Again from today's Psalm: "Bless our God, you peoples; make the voice of his praise to be heard; who holds our souls in life, and will not allow our feet to slip."

This belief, this faith, is not easy to maintain. It wasn't easy for the Jews – and still isn't – and it isn't easy for us. All the more reason, therefore, to carry on in faith. This is the theme of Paul's Letter to the Galatians (**Galatians 6:1-16**). "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If you sow to your own flesh you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit." Paul describes this attitude as a "new creation." "So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. let us work for the good of all."

Paul is echoing the words of Jesus, as reported in Luke's Gospel (**Luke 10:1-11, 16-20**). Sacrifice for self and others often carries a price. What is that price? It can be rejection. Jesus reminds us that "whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

Rejection is never easy to take, but it is tolerable if we are in good company. And so we are. And, as we discover, as we grow in faith, being in the company of the Lord is as good as it gets, even when there is sacrifice involved. In the Luke passage, "as good as it gets" is described as "nothing will hurt you."

Now, achieving this exceptional level of faith is really tough. I don't want to test my faith by "treading on snakes and scorpions." I would rather avoid this level of danger. But avoidance is not what we are expected to do. We are expected rather to step up, to confront, to battle in the Name of the Lord.

When we do step up, when we do sacrifice, when we do confront evil with "Peace be to this house," we are where we are supposed to be, namely at the Lord's side. And it might cost us our lives. This weekend, we remember family members, friends, neighbors, total strangers, who gave their lives so that we and others could live in peace.

The world is full of this level of sacrifice right now. And though our sacrifice, from a distance, might not be a difference-maker in the short-run, our faith in the long run can be, and is, a difference-maker. Because it is not just our faith in the Lord, but the Lord's faith in us. God won't quit on His Creation, and neither should we. From Luke's Gospel: "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!"

In the company of the Lord, we are much stronger than without that company. "Comfort in the midst of pain" is what we have been promised and what we can expect and what the Lord has delivered.

And, as we feel that comfort, our courage grows. That's the Good News. That's what you and I are in charge of in our space. "Bless our God ... who holds our souls in life, and will not allow our feet to slip."

To those of you who remember this weekend family and friends who have given their lives in the service of our nation, God be with you, as He is with those no longer with us.

Funny thing about Independence Day. The more we appreciate our dependence on the Lord, the more we value freedom. It's the freedom to say, "Yes, Lord, here I am. Send me." And it's the conviction that, in the language of today's closing hymn, God will mend flaws and shed grace. How fortunate we are as a nation and as individuals.

Amen.

Service of Holy Communion
Pentecost 4 – Independence Day Weekend – July 3, 2022

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 though 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 ever thine.

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Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

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.

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.*

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us pray.

Collects for Pentecost 4 and Independence Day

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Almighty God, who has given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech you that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of your favor and glad to do your will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness and in the day of trouble, do not allow our trust you to fail; all this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

First Reading – Isaiah 66:10-14

Psalm 68:1-8

Second Reading – Galatians 6:1-16

Hymn 707 – Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord to thee;

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love;
take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King;
take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.
Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

Gospel – Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Sermon

Nicene Creed – page 358

*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 Form IV – page 388

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, Almighty God, that all who confess your Name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one another and serve the common good.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours, and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your will for them may be fulfilled; and we pray that we may share with all your saints in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Confession and Absolution – page 360

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*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.*

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.*

The Peace – page 360

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

Announcements and *America (portions of Hymn 717)*

*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.*

Eucharistic Prayer – page 361

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: this is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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.

Breaking of the Bread

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Communion

Post Communion Prayer

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 719 – America! America!

O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain;
for purple mountains majesties above the fruited plain!
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!
America! 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!