

Lessons for 11th Sunday after Pentecost – August 21, 2022

Collect: Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one god, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Isaiah 58:9b-14

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in. If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

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

Psalm 103:1-8

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
 and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
 and forget not all his benefits.
He forgives all your sins
 and heals all your infirmities;
He redeems your life from the grave
 and crowns you with mercy and loving-kindness;

He satisfies you with good things,
and your youth is renewed like an eagle's.
The Lord executes righteousness
and judgment for all who are oppressed.
He made his ways known to Moses
and his works to the children of Israel.
The Lord is full of compassion and mercy,
slow to anger and of great kindness.

Second Reading: Hebrews 12:18-29

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. (For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what is shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

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

The Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Now Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured and not on the sabbath day." But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

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

Service of Holy Communion
Pentecost 11 – August 21, 2022

Hymn 496 – How bright appears the Morning Star

How bright appears the Morning Star, with mercy beaming from afar;
the host of heaven rejoices;
O righteous Branch, O Jesse's Rod! Thou Son of Man and Son of God!
We too, will lift our voices:
Jesus, Jesus! Holy, holy, yet most lowly, draw though near us;
Great Emmanuel, come and hear us.

Though circled by the hosts on high, he deigned to cast a pitying eye
upon his helpless creature;
The hole creation's Head and Lord, by highest seraphim adored,
assumed our very nature;
Jesus, grant us, through thy merit, to inherit thy salvation,
hear, O hear, our supplication.

Rejoice, ye heavens; thou earth reply; with praise, ye sinners, fill the sky,
for this his Incarnation.
Incarnate God, put forth thy power, ride on, ride on great Conqueror,
till all know thy salvation.
Amen, amen! Alleluia, alleluia! Praise be given evermore,
by earth and heaven.

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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.

Collect for Pentecost 11

Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading – Isaiah 58:9b-14

Psalm 103:1-8

Second Reading – Hebrews 12:18-29

Hymn 411, stanzas 1-3 – O bless the Lord, my soul!

O bless the Lord, my soul! His grace to thee proclaim!
And all that is within me join to bless his holy Name!

O bless the Lord, my soul! His mercies bear in mind!
Forget not all his benefits! The Lord to thee is kind.

He will not always chide; he will with patience wait;
His wrath is ever slow to rise and ready to abate.

Gospel – Luke 13:10-17

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 687 – A Mighty Fortress

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing:
our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing:
for still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing:
dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his Name, from age to age the same, and he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us;
we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us;
the prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure, one little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours through him who with us sideth:
let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
the body they may kill: God's truth abideth still, his kingdom is for ever.

Dismissal

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

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 11th Sunday after Pentecost, August 21, 2022.

Let's start this morning with the **8th verse of Psalm 103**: "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and of great goodness."

"Of great goodness." Even if we accept this notion, there is the question of access. We want "great goodness," but how do we get it, how do we experience it? If God's role is to provide, what is our role?

Well, fortunately for you and me, there are some options.

One option is highlighted in the lesson from Isaiah (**Isaiah 58:9**). "Remove the yoke."

Something is weighing us down. Something is preventing us from experiencing "great goodness." And that something can be countered by us. We are not subject to the yoke irreversibly. We are not captive to the yoke. We can remove the yoke if we so choose. We have a role to play, which sometimes we conveniently forget. It's easier to blame others for the yoke. It's not my fault. It's someone else's fault. And until that someone else changes his or her behavior, I'm stuck under the yoke.

When we give our children or grandchildren a new toy, we sometimes hear them say to us, "I can't do it." And what is our response? "What do the directions say? Have you read the directions?" We have this relationship with God. And what does God say? "Remove the yoke. Read the directions. Follow the directions. You can do it."

A second option is highlighted in today's lesson from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Take advantage of what God has already done for you.

From today's passage (**Hebrews 12:25**): "See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking." It's as if God has lifted the yoke for us, but we still feel the constriction of the yoke. The feeling can be heavy, but it doesn't have to be heavy. It isn't heavy unless we make it so. Perhaps it doesn't even exist. It weighs us down, but without the weight. It's a self-inflicted condition. How many

times have you said to your children “You can do it.” And, sure enough, when they finally “do it” – whatever the “it” is – they are ecstatic.

Think of those moments in the pool when a child discovers that he or she can indeed swim. “I did it, Grandpa!” Removing a yoke can be like this. The solution is available. We just have to accept the forgiveness of the Lord. It’s not a matter of creating this forgiveness. It’s not self-forgiveness. It’s the forgiveness of God. It’s a blessing. Not something that we have earned through perfect behavior, but something with which the Lord has addressed imperfect behavior.

And now we have a third option for experiencing the “great goodness” of the Lord. It’s an expanded understanding of the Sabbath. Yes, the Sabbath is a day of rest. But it is also another option for trusting in the healing power of God.

God doesn’t rest on the Sabbath. Yes, God is exhausted from the Creation. Who wouldn’t be? But God doesn’t take a day off from helping you and me. When we pray on the Sabbath, we don’t get a “We’re out of the office right now ... we’ll be open again in 24 hours.” If anything, God is busier on the Sabbath than any other day. For those who pray just one day a week, it’s probably on the Sabbath. That’s precisely when God needs to be alert to cries for help or thank-yous for blessings.

Setting aside one day a week for you and me is not for the purpose of doing nothing. It is rather for the purpose of focusing on the Lord. And what more important focus can there be than the healing power of God. Procrastination is not necessary when it comes to removing the yoke. “I couldn’t possibly bother the Lord on the Sabbath” is not what the Lord desires. If anything, the Lord wants to hear from us. “Great goodness” is available 24/7, not 24/6.

Here’s the phrase from today’s gospel (**Luke 13:16**): “be set free from bondage.” There are no time limitations. There are no other restrictions. By design, the Lord’s “great goodness” is always available. The eleventh commandment could be “Don’t limit yourself, and, by all means, don’t limit God.”

Today’s Collect reminds us that “God shows forth Divine power among all peoples.” The Lord’s “great goodness” doesn’t take a day-off. You and I do, but not the Lord. Whenever we feel heaviness of the yoke of life, we need to

remember that this heaviness, while sometimes overwhelming to you and me, is never overwhelming to the Lord.

Oh yes, the yoke can be very heavy. Think crucifixion. But the Lord didn't allow death to be the final chapter. Not for Jesus. Not for you and me. When we can't lift the yoke, when we can't free ourselves, we need to remember that help is always available, including help that we might call self-help, but which is really inspired-help. Whatever we call it, there is a role for us in the acceptance of the Lord's "great goodness."

Our final hymn today (**#687**) – *A mighty fortress* – has four stanzas. This hymn is in the section of the hymnal entitled "The Christian Life." It speaks of "mortal ills prevailing." But following quickly is this assurance: "We tremble not for him – referring to the Evil One - his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom – the Evil One – is sure, one little word shall fell him." And who is that "one little word"? It is the infant Jesus who grows up to fulfill God's promise that "mortal ills" will not prevail.

That's the Lord's "great goodness." That's what keeps us moving forward, even when such moving forward is a challenge. We are never alone. We might think so. We might act as if we are alone. But, never, ever, is this the case, even when we revert to what we call self-sufficiency.

But – and this is today's message – we have to want it. Not self-sufficiency, but the sufficient sacrifice. God offers. We receive. It's not forced on us. It is offered to us, in the birth, life, death and resurrection of a carpenter from Nazareth named Jesus. He is the Lord's "great goodness."

God has acted. God has taken the initiative. Our choice is to receive or not to receive. You and I gather to receive and to offer this incredible gift to all who care to listen, including and especially those closest to us for whom we want the very best. From a *Mighty Fortress*: "God's truth abideth still, his kingdom is for ever."

Amen.