

Lessons for 13th Sunday after Pentecost – September 4, 2022

Collect: Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our heart; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast in 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: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to others gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

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

Psalm 1

Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!

Their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and they meditate on his law day and night.

They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither;

and everything they do shall prosper.

It is not so with the wicked;

they are like chaff which the wind blows away.

Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes,

nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,

but the way of the wicked is doomed.

Second Reading: Philemon 1-21

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother. For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love – and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place, during my imprisonment for the gospel; but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother – especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

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

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33

Now large crowds were traveling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them, "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish." Or, what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and ask for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

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

Service of Holy Communion
Pentecost 13 – September 4, 2022

Hymn 433 – We gather together

We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing;
he chastens and hastens his will to make known;
the wicked oppressing now cease from distressing:
sing praises to his Name; he forget not his own.

Beside us to guide us, our God with us joining,
ordaining, maintaining, his kingdom divine;
so from the beginning the fight we were winning:
thou, Lord was at our side: all glory be thine!

We all do extol thee, thou leader triumphant,
and pray that thou still our defender wilt be.
Let thy congregation escape tribulation:
thy Name be ever praised! O Lord, make us free!

BCP - Page 355

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 13

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 in our 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 – Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalm 1

Second Reading – Philemon, verses 1-22

Hymn 316 – This is the hour of banquet and of song

This is the hour of banquet and of song;
this is the heavenly table spread for me;
here let me feast, and feasting, still prolong
the brief, bright hour of fellowship with thee.

Too soon we rise; we go our several ways;
The Bread and Wine consumed: yet all our days
though still art here with us - our Shield and Sun.

Feast after feast thus comes and passes by,
yet, passing, points to the glad feast above,
giving us foretaste of the festal joy,
the Lamb's great marriage feast of bliss and love.

Gospel – Luke 14:25-33

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 690 – Guide me, O thou great Jehovah

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy powerful hand;
bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me now and ever more,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through;
strong deliverer, strong deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield,
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on the Canaan's side;
songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

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, 13th Sunday after Pentecost, September 4, 2022.

My guess is that most of you, if not all of you, have been asked to write a recommendation for a friend, family member, student or neighbor. If so, this morning's Epistle is for you (**Philemon 1-21**).

The ones writing the recommendation are Paul and Timothy. The recipient of the recommendation is Philemon, their friend and co-worker. The one being recommended is Onesimus.

Paul speaks of Onesimus as the child of a fellow prisoner. "I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment."

Keep in mind that Paul and others are imprisoned because of their belief in the Risen Christ. When you and I profess our faith in Christ, as we are doing right now, we don't go to jail. In this age and country, we are free to gather and proclaim our faith.

But, what if it were not the case for the son of a close friend? What would be our argument, particularly if we did not know the person well? Paul knew the father of Onesimus, but did he really know Onesimus?

And note Paul's approach to those in power. "Confident in your obedience." Obedience to what? Presumably Paul is suggesting that if Philemon, the one with the power, really believes in the Risen Christ, he, Philemon, will do the right thing and facilitate Onesimus' release.

Imagine using this approach on a college admissions recommendation. "It's within your power, Mr. Admissions Officer, to admit my friend's son. And, "If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I hope that you can accommodate this request."

Why do you suppose the editors of the Bible decided to include this very short book, the Epistle to Philemon? It is so short, that it seems out of place. This lesson and the others appointed for today are pretty scary. "I command you to

do your duty.” Who is Paul to be talking that way? What were the editors thinking of? What does it move you and me to do centuries later?

Well, here’s a possibility. You and I know about Jesus because of a succession of recommendations. The Good News has been transmitted by word of mouth and later by the written word. You and I are the latest in a long line of hearers and writers who became believers and then transmitters of the Greatest Story Ever Told.

We are part of the Good News Family. We are recipients of the Good News, now charged with the sharing of the Good News. In the language of today’s Gospel lesson (**Luke 14:27**), we are “carriers of the Cross.” We are doing our part in “building a tower of faith.”

Our contributions might not be a letter about a fellow prisoner, but we are contributing nonetheless. These contributions come in many forms, including Sunday attendance, hymn singing, scripture reading, professional training, home management, child-raising, corporate responsibility, civil protection, agency support, and volunteering for service of all sorts. There is no activity that precludes praising the Lord.

You all, we all, represent a variety of gifts and talents and training and passions and sacrifices. As we learned about Jesus from others, so are others learning about Jesus from you and me. Now that’s really scary. But it’s true. It’s how God has chosen to keep the Good News alive, in play, as it were. We are part of this effort. We are receivers and we are passers.

And, like Paul and Timothy, we are recommending to anyone who will listen and anyone watching an approach to daily living, grounded in the Love of God. Most of the time, we’re not even conscious of this role. But we are executing it. Don’t ask us. Ask those who observe us. People watch. People listen. And sometimes people emulate. We do make a difference. The Holy Spirit does act through us.

That action is at its most effective when we consciously cooperate with the Spirit. We take our recommendation role seriously. We are aware of our custodial responsibility of the Good News of Christ’s Victory over Death. We are proud of

this role. We are proud to be asked by God through all sorts of means to proclaim God's love in Christ.

Yes, you and I are in a position, by our own choosing, to fight for what is right. Onesimus is like our own child. We stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. We treat them as our own children. We do for them what God does for us through Jesus. We are peace-recipients and in turn peace-makers. May the Love of Christ be with you and me and those with whom we share this Love.

Oh yes, the Letter to Philemon is the shortest book of the Bible. But don't shortchange its power. It is packed full of Good News and the responsibility to share that Good News. And, to quote St. Paul, "Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say."

Representing the Lord is what you and I do. It's a great privilege for us and for those whom we touch. **Plus** – now, don't tell anybody – it's self-serving. We benefit, along with those being served.

Remember today's passage from Deuteronomy (**Deuteronomy 30:15**): "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances – like recommending Jesus to others – then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess."

Yes, in serving others, we do serve ourselves. Call it selfish. Call it wise. Call it obedient. Today's Psalm (**Psalm 1:1**) calls it "happy." Whatever we call it, it is what the Lord desires. God sets the terms. Which is a great gift to you and me and to those to whom we recommend the Lord Jesus. It's called Win-Win. And we have it, right here and wherever we take it!

Amen.

