

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, 16th Sunday after Pentecost, September 25, 2022.

Let's call today Menu Sunday. Menu with a capital M.

We are all familiar with menus. They come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. There are big menus that we ponder at restaurants. There are small menus that we ponder when we check our e-mail. And there are mental menus when we try to remember why we're going to the grocery store.

Our lessons today are about menus. The prophet Amos (**Amos 6:4-7**) offers a behavior menu. Here are some options:

Lie on beds of ivory
Lounge on couches
Eat lambs from the flock
Eat calves from the stall
Sing idle songs
Drink wines
Anoint with oils
Grieve over the ruin of Joseph

All sorts of options.

Psalm 146 offers a two-dimensional menu. There's a "happy are they" menu (**verses 4-6**) and a "when they breathe their last" menu (**verses 1-3**).

In his letter to Timothy, St. Paul provides a two-column menu: one column for "fight good fight" (**1 Timothy 6:12-21**), and another for "don't be haughty (**1 Timothy 6:13-16**)."

And in Luke's Gospel we have two menus (**Luke 16:19**). There is one for the rich man, and one for the poor man. The poor man's menu consisted of "what fell from the rich man's table." The contrast is stark and troubling.

Lots of decisions because of lots of menus, all of which are available to us.

Some observations.

First, we should be thankful that we have a choice. God's recommendations - which are really commandments, not recommendations - are crystal clear. "Love the Lord your God" or "don't love the Lord your God." Again, our choice. God tells us what God would like us to do, but God doesn't insist, to the point of offering only one choice.

Second, we should be thankful that, when it comes to obeying the commandments, it's not one and done. If we break a commandment on Monday, we have Tuesday as a new day, a new opportunity to obey. A fresh start is not a given. God could set things up in a more restrictive manner. But, no, God wants to retain the choice element, the obedience element. It means more to God and to us if we choose to obey.

And third, there's a payoff for those who choose to obey. A reward, if you will. I'm not talking about just an after-life. I'm talking about a sense of being at one with our God in this life. At-one-ment. Atonement. God gives us the capacity to do what we are supposed to do. We are on the right track. We are pleasing our Lord, and, in the process, we are doing our part in caring constructively for the whole Creation.

One more observation. You and I and all the children of God don't walk in lock-step. We are not an award-winning band in a parade. We don't expect, given what we know about ourselves, much less about others, that our goal is a blue ribbon every time we compete. We know better than to seek perfection. There was one who was perfect and we address him as Lord. But we are not the Lord.

But, we need the Lord's help, and, thank the Lord, he provides that help. And, as we listen closely to what the Lord is saying, our behavior, our faith grows stronger.

We don't see Jesus as an accident of history. We understand Jesus as a deliberate act of God. "I'm going to demonstrate what I mean. I'm going to become one of you, and live under the same rules that you live under, and model a behavior of obedience and trust."

So, here we have yet another menu. A summary, if you will, with four items.

- We have a choice.
- It's not one and done.
- If we select from the menu God's recommendations, there is joy on the other end.
- And, if ever we forget any or all of this, we need to look no further than Jesus of Nazareth to get us back on track.

This fourth element – dessert, if you will - is captured in this morning's **Collect**: "Grant us, the fullness of your grace, that we, running to obtain your promises, may become partakers of your heavenly treasure."

And our final hymn today (**# 563**) suggests that this dessert is not chocolate cake, but the "bread of heaven." From stanza #1: "His love foretells thy trials; he knows thine hourly need; he can with bread of heaven thy fainting spirit feed."

What a menu. What a chef. What an enterprise. And – thank you very much – what a clientele. Look who gets to order from the menu. That would be you and I. And look at the Special of the Day: the Lord Jesus.

Are you ready to order? Yes, we're ready. Thank you very much. We'll take the special.

Amen.

Service of Morning Prayer
Pentecost 16 – September 25, 2022

Hymn 365 – Come, thou almighty King

Come, thou almighty King, help us thy Name to sing,
help us to praise Father whose love unknown all things created own,
build in our hearts thy throne, Ancient of Days.

Come, thou incarnate word, by heaven and earth adored;
our prayer attend: come and thy people bless; come, give thy word success;
stablish thy righteousness, Savior and friend.

Come, holy Comforter, thy sacred witness bear in this glad hour:
thou, who almighty art, now rule in every heart,
and ne'er from us depart, Spirit of power.

To Thee, great One in Three, the highest praises be,
hence ever more; thy sovereign majesty may we in glory see,
and to eternity love and adore.

BCP - Page 40 - Greeting

I was glad when they said unto me, "We will go into the house of the Lord."

BCP – Pages 41 – Invitation to Confession

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his Holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us kneel in silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

BCP – Pages 41-42 – Confession and Absolution

*Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep,
we have 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 we 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.
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 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.*

BCP – Page 42 - Gloria

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.

BCP – Pages 44-45 – Venite

O come, let us sing unto 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 hands 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 peoples with his truth.

Psalm 146

First Reading – Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Second Reading – I Timothy 6:6-19

Hymn 509, Stanzas 1-3

Spirit divine, attend our prayers, and make this house thy home;
descend with all thy gracious powers, O come, great Spirit, come!

Come as the light; to us reveal our emptiness and woe,
and lead us in those paths of life whereon the righteous go.

Come as the fire, and purge our hearts like sacrificial flame;
let our whole soul an offering be to our Redeemer's Name.

Gospel – Luke 16:19-31

Sermon – The Reverend Charles Rowins

BCP – page 358 - The Apostles' Creed

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.*

BCP – page 54 – the Lord's Prayer

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

*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.

BCP – page 55 – Suffrages A

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 16th Sunday after Pentecost

O God, you declare your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity:
Grant us the fullness of your grace, that we, running to obtain your promises, may
become partakers of your heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who
lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for Sundays

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.*

BCP – pages 58-59 - The General Thanksgiving

*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 our selves 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 Introduction of Guests

Introduction of Guests and Prayer for Providence Center

Dear Lord, we ask your continued blessing on Providence Center and all institutions that improve the lives of those with special needs. Be with those who lead these institutions, those individuals and families assisted by these institutions, and those who support these institutions with time and talent and treasure. We offer this prayer in the Name of our Lord Jesus, who, in his birth, life, death and resurrection, demonstrated the power of love. *Amen.*

Hymn 717 - America – portions of stanzas 1 and 3

*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.*

BCP – page 59 – 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 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.

BCP – page 59 – The Grace

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 563 –Go forward, Christian soldier

Go forward, Christian soldier, beneath his banner true:
the Lord himself, thy Leader, shall all thy foes subdue.
His love foretells thy trials; he knows thine hourly need;
he can with bread of heaven thy fainting spirit feed.

Go forward, Christian soldier, fear not the secret foe;
far more o'er thee are watching than human eyes can know:
trust only Christ, thy Captain; cease not to watch and pray;
heed not the treacherous voices that lure thy soul astray.

Go forward, Christian soldier, nor dream of peaceful rest,
till Satan's host is vanquished and heaven is all possessed;
till Christ himself shall call thee to lay thine armor by,
and wear in endless glory the crown of victory.

Go forward, Christian soldier, fear not the gathering night;
the Lord has been thy shelter; the Lord will by thy light.
When morn his face revealeth thy dangers all are past:
O pray that faith and virtue may keep thee to the last!

Dismissal

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

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Lessons for 16th Sunday after Pentecost - September 25, 2022

Collect: O God, you declare your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity: Grant us the fullness of your grace, that we, running to obtain your promises, may become partakers of your heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament: Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Alas for those who are at ease in Zion, and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria. Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David improvise on instruments of music; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile, and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.

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!

Epistle: I Timothy 6:6-19

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and, in their eagerness to be rich, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made a good confession. I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will bring about at the right time – he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. As for those who, in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

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

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

Jesus said, "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Beside all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house – for I have five brothers – that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.'" He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

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