

Service of Holy Communion
Pentecost 17 – October 2, 2022

Hymn 366, stanzas 1-4 – Holy God, we praise thy Name

Holy God, we praise thy Name, Lord of all, we bow before thee;
all on earth thy scepter claim, all in heaven above adore thee.
Infinite thy vast domain, everlasting is the reign.

Hark, the loud celestial hymn angel choirs above are raising;
cherubim and seraphim, in unceasing chorus praising.
Fill the heavens with sweet accord: holy, holy, holy Lord.

Lord, the apostolic train join, thy Sacred Name to hallow;
prophets swell the loud refrain, and the white robed martyrs follow;
and, from morn till set of sun, through the Church the song goes on.

Holy Father, holy Son, Holy Spirit, Three we name thee,
while in essence only One, undivided God we claim thee,
then, adoring, bend the knee and confess thy mystery.

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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 17

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading – Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

Psalm 37:1-10

Second Reading – II Timothy 1:1-14

Hymn 708 – Savior, like a shepherd lead us

Savior, like a shepherd lead us; much we need thy tender care;
In thy pleasant pastures feed us; for our use thy folds prepare.
Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus! Thou has bought us, thine we are.

Early let us seek thy favor, early let us learn thy will;
Do thou, Lord, our only Savior, with thy love our bosoms fill.
Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus! Thou hast loved us: love us still.

Gospel – Luke 17:5-10

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 436, stanzas 1-4 – Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates; behold the King of glory waits!
The King of kings is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.

O blest the land, the city blest, where Christ the ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes to whom this King of triumph comes!

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart
from earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer come! I open wide my heart to thee: here, Lord, abide!
Let me thy inner presence feel: thy grace and love in me reveal.

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, Pentecost 17, October 2, 2022.

From today's gospel reading: "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!" **(Luke 17:10)**

At first reading and hearing, it's tempting to jump to a discussion of race relations. But that's not the point of this passage. This is a passage about duty, not race.

So, let's put race aside for a moment. We'll come back to it, but not right now.

For now, let's look at the concept of duty. What is our job, and how are we supposed to execute our job.

The first thing to do is to substitute the word "employee" for the word "slave." And then let's look at how to be the best employee we can be.

All of us, I'm sure, can appreciate the sense of duty. An example close to home.

As an employee, I have a duty to serve the people of this Island community and more specifically this congregation. I wasn't forced into this role. I wasn't sold into this role. I chose to accept the job of serving this congregation. I wasn't forced to work here. I wanted to work here.

In short, I am not a slave. I am an employee. I have a job to do. And that job is to serve. It is to help prepare the altar, wear appropriate vestments, distribute bread and wine, clean up, and a bunch of other tasks. The lesson from Luke applies here: "Prepare supper for me, put on your apron, and serve me while I eat and drink."

You, as the employer, have expectations. I, as employee, also have expectations. And, I trust that your expectations and mine are in sync. And because there is a common understanding, I don't expect you to thank me for showing up for work I have agreed to do. It's my duty.

This is the kind of framework that our first lesson today addresses. **(Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4)** "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it." It's called a contract. And it's designed to avoid "strife and contention." All parties know to what they are committed.

Today's Psalm describes an ideal relationship: "Take delight in the Lord, and he shall give you your heart's desire. Commit your way to the Lord and put your trust in him, and he will bring it to pass." (**Psalm 37:5**)

You get the point. When a person is hired, both the one being hired and the one hiring should be on the same page.

This principle of mutual awareness and consent also applies to our relationship with the Lord. Paul speaks to this awareness and consent in his Second Letter to Timothy (**2 Timothy 1:1-14**).

Paul is grooming Timothy to carry on Paul's work in spreading the Good News. Both Paul and Timothy have experienced prison because of their efforts to speak on behalf of the Risen Christ. They are on the same page.

Paul's point in today's lesson is simply to remind Timothy – and by extension you and me – that receiving the Good News of Jesus and sharing that Good News is voluntary. Nobody forces us into this role. We choose this path and accept whatever goes with this path.

More to the point of today's lesson, we – all of us by our presence here - choose servant-hood. We choose to work hard in proclaiming the Good News. We don't view this hard work as slavery in a negative sense, but as duty in a positive sense. No one is forcing us to do anything. We choose to work hard, really hard, in support of the Risen Christ.

Now, we understand that support of the Risen Christ is not a cake-walk. Yes, there is risk involved. We get it. And not only do we get it, we invite it. Bring it on. If Jesus can die on a cross for us, we can sacrifice as well.

At this point, you might be tempted to say, "Nice try, Father Rowins. But aren't you forgetting the ugly truth about slavery. It's not a choice that one makes. It's a condition that is assigned. The only choice is whether to endure or give up or lobby for change.

Point well taken.

As a society, and as entities within that society, we have recognized that we have some making-up to do. Endurance and giving-up are not the only choices. We have tried and continue to try to address the issue of slavery. Not self-imposed second-class citizenship, but outside-imposed second-class citizenship. But, as we do so, as we work to correct injustice, to establish level playing fields, we should view our efforts as a duty, and approach this duty with pride and excitement that things that were wrong are getting better.

Yes, we have a duty. And fulfilling this duty is a choice on our part. We want to make things better. We take pride in making things better. We happily apply our talents. We offer our best. Yes, there are sacrifices, but rarely at the level of crucifixion. And when crucifixion is the result, we honor that sacrifice.

But frequency isn't the point. In this setting, whatever our frequency in following the Lord, we should understand our following as voluntary, and therefore as duty – our choice - as well as joy – our experience. Indeed, our joy is at its peak when our service in the Lord's Name is at its peak.

Okay, Mr. Preacher, I get this. Duty and joy go together. But I don't get today's gospel. "You cannot serve God and wealth."

Well, think about the manager's dilemma. He isn't fulfilling his duty as manager. And, then, when he is called on the carpet, he exercises whatever authority is left to enhance himself, not his boss. Yet his boss commends him for "acting shrewdly." Something like "Very clever, but you're still fired."

The take-away here is that cleverness is no substitute for faithfulness. "Very clever, but this is not what you signed up for." The goal is not duty and cleverness, but duty and joy. Cleverness has a very short life-span. Joy, on the other hand, is for ever. "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much."

Very sound advice as we, as a nation and as individuals, continue to work to align duty and joy. Just as we do here. Amen.

Lessons for 17th Sunday after Pentecost – October 2, 2022

Collect: Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw. O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous – therefore judgment comes forth perverted. I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint. Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

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

Psalm 37:1-10

Do not fret yourself because of evildoers;
do not be jealous of those who do wrong.
For they shall soon wither like the grass,
and like the green grass fade away.
Put your trust in the Lord and do good;
 dwell in the land and feed on his riches.
Take delight in the Lord,
and he shall give you your heart’s desire.
Commit your way to the Lord and put your trust in him,
and he will bring it to pass.

He will make your righteousness as clear as the light
and your just dealing as the noonday.

Be still before the Lord
and wait patiently for him.

Do not fret yourself over the one who prospers,
the one who succeeds in evil schemes.

Refrain from anger, leave rage alone;
do not fret yourself; it leads only to evil.

For evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who wait upon the Lord shall possess the land.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:1-14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I am grateful to God – whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did – when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in our grandmother Lois and our mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Do not be ashamed then of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

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

Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for them, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'"

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