

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 18th Sunday after Pentecost, October 9, 2022.

As you know, I often give a title to a given Sunday based on the lessons for that Sunday. Today's title is Frustration Sunday.

In our first reading (**2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c**), Commander Naaman is frustrated because there appears to be nothing he can do to cure his leprosy. He gets so frustrated that he is ready to rend his garments, tear his clothes, maybe even give up on the possibility of curing the leprosy.

In Paul's Second Letter to Timothy (**2 Timothy 2:8-15**), Paul reminds us that the best defense against hardship is to remain faithful. Not easy, but much better than giving up. And, even if we give up on ourselves, God does not give up on us. "If we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself."

In Naaman's case, his "faithfulness" is really the faithfulness of Israeli servants. First, the servant to Naaman's wife. And then, Elisha, the Israeli prophet. Both persuaded Naaman to give the God of Israel a try. "Wash and be clean" was their pitch to Naaman. Eventually Naaman took their advice and "immersed himself seven times in the Jordan."

A smart move on Naaman's part. Finally. "So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan ... his flesh was restored." Prompting Naaman to proclaim, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel."

Grateful and powerful testimony.

You and I get frustrated over small things and large things. And sometimes we don't listen to those trying to help. We are prideful creatures, who sometimes let pride get in the way of healing. A Biblical version of "I can do it myself."

Today's Psalm (**Psalm 111**) suggests that inviting God into the discussion is "the beginning of wisdom." Well, just how does one "invite God into a discussion"? Funny you should ask. It's called prayer. And one of the great prayers is not one that we made up, but that Jesus himself taught us. "Our Father"

Today's lesson from Luke (**Luke 17:11-19**) describes a prayer offered by ten lepers seeking healing. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" And, sure enough, they "were made clean."

But only one of the ten bothered to thank Jesus. Naaman's response was a lot more impressive, wasn't it?

A lesson for you and me. Never assume that God is going to respond to our requests for healing in a manner prescribed by us. God will do what God does, which is often beyond our understanding.

But – and this is key - not "beyond" our faith. We approach God in faith. We make our case in faith. We listen in faith. And, if need be, we adjust our approach in faith. And we accept the outcome in faith.

Note that at every point in this process, frustration is a possibility. "Do it now, God." "I'm getting impatient, God." "I'm beginning to wonder if you're even there, God." "Help me, God. I'm getting no feedback from you." "Give me, I pray, some assurance that you've got my back."

And, when that assurance doesn't seem to be forthcoming in a manner that we approve of, we get even more frustrated with God. "Help me out here, God. I feel as if I'm losing you."

Stop right there! "I feel as if I'm losing you. Or, are you losing me? Either way, I'm at a crossroads of faith. I need something more from you, Lord. You just don't seem to get me. Help me out. Please, I pray of you."

I've had this conversation with God. I can't speak for you, but I'd be very surprised if you also have not had this conversation.

It goes with the turf. It's humanity, trying to understand things which frankly are above our pay-grade. It's as if we're a private speaking to a general. And we get frustrated because we can't speak General-ise. But guess what. The General speaks Private-ise. Hallelujah!

Yes, God becomes one of us. He stoops to our level. He feels our pain. When Jesus suffered on the Cross, the Creator of the Universe was suffering.

And we can be sure that for all the frustration in God that we feel, God is frustrated with you and me. It's Frustration Time for everybody. We're all trying to do the right thing, and, yes, we stumble when we do so.

But notice what God says at the end of today's passage from Luke: "Get up and go on your way, your faith has made you well."

Can it be that easy? Can it be that God also feels frustrated and acts in Jesus to assure us that all will be well?

Yes, that is our faith. Don't ask me why. Don't ask me how. Don't ask me what is in God's head. We don't know those answers yet. But that we will know at some point is God's promise and our faith.

And that we will know something right now, in this life, is also God's promise and our faith.

Frustration goes with the territory. Appropriate therefore that we have a Frustration Sunday. But what also goes with the territory, this Sunday and every Sunday, is a profound sense that what we don't know now will not hurt us. Indeed it will save us.

So, take that, Frustration. Give us your best shot, and we'll give it right back. And we will win, just as Paul said: "The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him"

Amen.

Lessons for Pentecost 18 – October 9, 2022

Collect: Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c

Naaman, Commander of the Army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to his mistress, "If only my Lord were the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me." But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'? So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean. Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel."

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

Psalm 111

Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.
Great are the deeds of the Lord!
they are studied by all who delight in them.
His work is full of majesty and splendor,
and his righteousness endures for ever.
He makes his marvelous works to be remembered;
the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.
He gives food to those who fear him;
he is ever mindful of his covenant.
He has shown his people the power of his works,
in giving them the lands of the nations.
The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice;
all his commandments are sure.
They stand fast for ever and ever,
because they are done in truth and equity.
He sent redemption to his people; he commanded his covenant for ever;
holy and awesome is his Name.
The fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom;
*those who act accordingly have a good understanding; his praise endures
for ever.*

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 2:8-15

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David - that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself. Remind them of this, and warn them before God that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.

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

Gospel: Luke 17:11-19

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, there were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet, and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, 'Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

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

Service of Morning Prayer
Pentecost 18 – October 9, 2022

Hymn 427, stanzas 1-3 – When morning gilds the skies

When morning gilds the skies, my heart, awaking, cries,
 may Jesus Christ be praised!

When evening shadows fall, this rings my curfew call,
 may Jesus Christ be praised!

When mirth for music longs, this is my song of songs:
 may Jesus Christ be praised!

God's holy house of prayer hath none that can compare
 with Jesus Christ be praised!

No lovelier antiphon in all high heaven is known
 than, Jesus Christ be praised!

There to the eternal Word the eternal psalm is heard:
 may Jesus Christ be praised.

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 111

First Reading – 2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c

Second Reading – 2 Timothy 2:8-15

Hymn 680, stanzas 1-3

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home:

Under the shadow of thy throne thy saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is thine arm alone, and our defense is sure.

Before the hills in order stood, or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou art God; to endless year the same.

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 18th Sunday after Pentecost

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for 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.*

Prayer for Patience

Dear Lord, thank you for the talents with which you have blessed us. We do our best to make good use of these gifts by trying to share them with others and also improve on them. But sometimes we falter in these efforts. Sometimes no matter how hard we work, we don't feel any improvement in outcomes. We know we need to take things a day at a time. We want to be better for you, Lord, but we know that there are some things that we can't rush. Please teach us to be patient with ourselves, because we know that our hard work will be for naught if we don't have the patience to persevere. Everything will fall into place in due time. Your time, not our time. This we pray to You, O 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

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 371 – Thou, whose almighty word

Thou, whose almighty word chaos and darkness heard, and took their flight;
hear us, we humbly pray, and where the Gospel day shed not its glorious ray,
let there be light!

Thou who didst come so bring on thy redeeming wing healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind, sight to the inly blind, now to all human kind,
let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love, life-giving, holy Dove, speed forth thy flight!
move on the waters' face bearing the gifts of grace, and, in earth's darkest place,
let there be light!

Holy and blessed Three, glorious Trinity; wisdom, love, might;
boundless as ocean's tide, rolling in fullest pride, through the world far and wide,
let there be light!

Dismissal

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

