

Epiphany 7 Service – February 20, 2022

Prelude

Hymn 598 – Lord Christ, when first thou cam'st to earth

Lord Christ, when first thou cam'st to earth, upon a cross they bound thee,
and mocked thy saving kingship then by thorns with which they crowned thee:
and still our wrongs may weave thee now new thorns to pierce that steady brow,
and robe of sorrow round thee.

O awful Love, which found no room in life where sin denied thee,
and, doomed to death, must bring to doom the powers which crucified thee,
till not a stone was left on stone, and all those nations' pride, o'er-thrown,
went down to dust beside thee!

New advent of the love of Christ, shall we again refuse thee,
till in the night of hate and war we perish as we lose thee?
From old unfaith our souls release to seek the kingdom of thy peace,
by which alone we choose thee.

O wounded hands of Jesus, build in us thy new creation;
our pride is dust, our vaunt is stilled, we wait thy revelation:
O love that triumphs over loss, we bring our hearts before thy cross,
to finish thy salvation.

Opening sentence - BCP page 40

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

Invitation to Confession – BCP page 41

So that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship Almighty God, let us, with penitent and obedient hearts, confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

Confession – BCP pages 41-42

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

Absolution – BCP page 42

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.*

Gloria – BCP page 42

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.

Venite – BCP page 44

Come, let us sing to 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 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 people with his truth.

Psalm 37:1-12, 41-42 – insert

First Reading: Genesis 45:3-11, 15– insert

Second Reading: I Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50 - insert

Hymn 594 – God of grace and God of glory

God of grace and God of glory, on thy people pour thy power;
Crown thine ancient Church's story; bring her bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

Lo! the hosts of evil round us scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us free our heart to faith and praise:
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.

Cure thy children's warring madness, bend our pride to thy control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, lest we miss thy kingdom's goal,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;
'let the gift of thy salvation be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving thee whom we adore,
serving thee whom we adore.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 6:27-38 - insert

Sermon

Apostles' Creed – pp 53-54

*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.*

Lord's Prayer

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.
Let us pray.

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be 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.*

Suffrages A – page 55

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 Epiphany 7 – insert

O Lord, you have taught us that without love whatever we do is worth nothing; Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts your greatest gift, which is love, the true bond of peace and of all virtue, without which whoever lives is accounted dead before you. Grant this for the sake of your only Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Prayers for Sundays and for Strength – BCP page 56 and unknown

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.*

Dear Lord, grant us strength to ...
refrain from judgment, embrace joy, practice humility, quell anger, shun greed, strive to serve, push through fear, walk towards grace, run with faith, soar with forgiveness, grow our confidence in your guidance and mercy and the love of your Son Jesus. *Amen.*

General Thanksgiving - BCP pp 58-59

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 ourselves 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 and *America*

Prayer of St. Chrysostom – BCP, p 59

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.*

The Grace – BCP, p 59

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore.

Hymn 580 – God, who stretched the spangled heaven

God, who stretched the spangled heavens infinite in time and place,
flung the suns in burning radiance through the silent fields of space:
we, your children in our likeness share inventive powers with you;
Great Creator, still creating, show us what we yet may do.

Proudly rise our modern cities, stately buildings, row on row;
yet their windows, blank, unfeeling, stare on canyoned streets below,
where the lonely drift unnoticed in the city's ebb and flow,
lost to purpose and to meaning, scarcely caring where they go.

We have ventured worlds undreamed of since the childhood of our race;
known the ecstasy of winging through untraveled realms of space;
probed the secrets of the atom, yielding unimagined power,
facing us with life's destruction or our most triumphant hour.

As each far horizon beckons, may it challenge us anew,
children of creative purpose, serving others, honoring you.
May our dreams prove rich with promise, each endeavor well begun:
Great Creator, give us guidance till our goal and yours are one.

Dismissal

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

Postlude

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 7th Sunday of Epiphany, February 20, 2022.

Can you stand one more sports analogy? Of course, you can. And it's not just a sports analogy. This analogy can apply to any human activity that involves a challenge that is too easy.

We don't like easy challenges. We like challenges that test us. If we're taking batting practice and the pitcher is not throwing hard enough, we tell the batting practice pitcher to throw harder.

There's a version of this, not just in every sport, but in every human activity, including religious belief. We don't respond to things that are too easy. We want to be tested. Not beyond our means, but certainly more than a slam dunk.

What is an activity that you like to engage in that offers a challenge? Not a challenge beyond your means, but a challenge that tests your means. We like our achievements to be based on hard work. Raise the bar, not too high, but higher than what we can easily achieve. Make us work for our achievements. Otherwise they're not really achievements.

When you consider a job promotion, you respond to a challenge. When you consider raising a family, you respond to a challenge. When you take on any challenge, you consider what the risks are. If there are no risks at all, you will probably look for a different challenge, more in-line with what you perceive to be your capabilities.

The human being is made for stretching. We are happiest when we can stretch and, in stretching, advance our situation. We are not happy when we are bored. Why? Because we don't have to stretch at all.

Our lessons today, and indeed the whole Christian Faith, are about stretching. Is there a bigger stretch than "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you"? (**Luke 6:27**) The passage from Luke's gospel ends with this:

“A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Pressed ... shaken ... running over. There are action verbs. This is not passivity. It is response. From today's Psalm (**Psalm 37:3**): “Put your trust in the Lord and do good.” Not “Put your trust in the Lord and expect him to do good.” No, inherent in our trust in the Lord is the knowledge that the Lord expects a partnership. And the partnership is often embedded in challenge.

Challenge of any sort can be overwhelming. It can cause us to fade into the background. But, when we do so, we are not happy. We like to engage challenges. We expect to stretch. Even when we fall short, there is some pride on which we can build. After all, other challenges will not be far behind. Life is full of them.

We have watched with interest and respect and some fear three grandsons become rock climbers. From a local gym in a Philadelphia suburb to massive boulders throughout the Southwest, they are constantly testing themselves. Using powerful fingers, they scale nature's walls grip by grip. They are exhilarated by the challenge. They are proud of how far they have stretched. And they want more.

The story of Joseph and his brothers is our story (**Genesis 45:3-11, 15**). Joseph forgave his brothers when it would have been easy to hold a grudge. Like rock-climbing, forgiveness is hard work. We know that. But, what we discover is that holding a grudge turns out to be even harder work.

This is a life lesson. And it is one of the main reasons why you and I are here, together, confessing our sins, receiving the Lord's absolution, and re-entering the battle, with renewed confidence and with thanksgiving. Where else can you find that combination?

Yes, stretching has a payoff. And it's a renewed sense of being the kind of people that we are meant to be. Not taking the unchallenging path, but embracing a path that invites us to be at our best. And we don't get to “our best” without accepting and confronting challenge. Hard work? Yes. Disappointment sometimes? Yes again.

But when stretching leads to hitting the ball out of the park, we're ecstatic. We did it. We can do it. Bring it on.

The Church has a version of "bring it on." And that version is Holy Scripture. It's a timeless collection of responding to challenges of all sorts, learning from those experiences, and giving thanks for them.

There is no better example of "bring it on" than the history of the Jewish people. Remember the assurance that Joseph gives to his people: "You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. I will provide for you there." (**Genesis 45:10**)

And indeed God did provide for the Jewish people. And ironically one of the provisions was and is continued challenge. That's how the Jews perceive their place in the scheme of things. And, more to the point of this morning, that's how you and I perceive our place in the scheme of things. "Bring it on, Lord. Throw it harder. Test us more. Sustain the challenges of daily living and, yes, the challenge of end of life. Do not forsake us, Lord. And help us not to forsake you."

And guess what. The Lord responds to this kind of dedication, this acceptance of challenge, this trust in the Lord. "A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

Verse 42 of today's Psalm is telling (**Psalm 37:42**). "The Lord will help them and rescue them; he will rescue them from the wicked and deliver them, because they seek refuge in him."

Well, what does "refuge in him" involve? It doesn't mean "I turn everything over to you, Lord. You take care of it. It's beyond me." No, there is an expectation that, when we seek the Lord's help, we expect a challenge, we understand that stretching is involved, that risk is involved, that growth probably won't happen all at once.

This is the realistic attitude that you and I bring to our worship. Yes, we are reminded of life's challenges. But we are also reminded of God's desire to help us meet those challenges. Which means stretching – for all of us.

This is our spiritual gym. Substitute altar and kneeler for Peloton and push-ups. Growth doesn't come easily. But it does come. Not easy, by any means. But worthwhile, by all means. "Bring it on, Lord."

Amen.

Lessons for 7th Sunday of Epiphany – February 20, 2022

Collect: O Lord, you have taught us that without love whatever we do is worth nothing; Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts your greatest gift, which is love, the true bond of peace and of all virtue, without which whoever lives is accounted dead before you. Grant this for the sake of your only son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

First Reading: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me.” And they came closer. He said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, “Thus says your son Joseph, ‘God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. I will provide for you there – since there are five more years of famine to come – so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.’” And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 37:1-12, 41-42

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 its 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 our 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.

In a little while the wicked shall be no more;
you shall search out their place, but they will not be there.

But the lowly shall possess the land;
they will delight in abundance of peace.

But the deliverance of the righteous comes from the Lord;
he is their stronghold in time of trouble.

The Lord will help them and rescue them;
he will rescue them from the wicked and deliver them, because they seek refuge in him.

Second Reading: I Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.

As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven. What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

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

Gospel: Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said, "I say to you that listen, Love our enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure your get back."

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