

Fourth Sunday of Easter Service – May 8, 2022

Prelude

Hymn 410 – Praise my soul, the King of heaven

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; to his feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, evermore his praises sing:
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.

Praise him for his grace and favor to his people in distress;
Praise him still the same as ever, slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Alleluia, alleluia! Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like he tends and spares us; well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hand he gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia, alleluia! Widely yet his mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore him; ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him, dwellers all in time and space.
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise with us the God of grace.

Opening sentence - BCP page 40

This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

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 23 – insert

First Reading: Acts 9:36-43 – insert

Second Reading: Revelation 7:9-17 – insert

Hymn 416, stanzas 1-3

For the beauty of the earth

For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth over and around us lies,
Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the beauty of each hour of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower, sun and moon, and stars of light.
Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's delight,
For the mystic harmony linking sense to sound and sight.
Christ our God, to thee we raise this hour hymn of grateful praise.

Gospel Lesson: John 10:22-30 - 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 Easter 4 – insert

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Prayers for Sunday, Peace, and Mothers – BCP pp 56 and 58

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.*

Lord Jesus Christ, who didst stretch out thine arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of thy saving embrace: So clothe us in thy Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know thee to the knowledge and love of thee; for the honor of thy Name. *Amen.*

God of love, we thank you for the gift of our mothers: who labour to bring us into this world, who guide us on life's journey, who teach us how to pray to you. We praise you, God, for mothers who listen to us and cry with us, who applaud our progress and laugh with us, who want the best for us, who dream with us, who love us always, sometimes in ways that we don't understand. But, Lord, you understand, and for that divine love we give you thanks. Thank you for all your gifts, especially for our parents, those living and those in a new life with you. Help us always to make them proud. *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 376 – Joyful, joyful

Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before thee, praising thee, their sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.

All thy works with joy surround thee, earth and heaven reflect thy rays,
stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise.
field and forest, vale and mountain, blooming meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain, call us to rejoice in thee.

Thou art giving and forgiving ever blessing, ever blest,
well-spring of the joy of living, ocean-depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother: all who live in love are thine;
teaching us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.

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, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 8, 2022.

This morning's Psalm – the 23rd in the collection of Psalms – is familiar. The Lord is the central figure. The Lord does this and the Lord does that. And we respond with a promise: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

The passage from Acts is less familiar. Indeed the Lord isn't mentioned until the last verse of the passage. The more prominent figure in this passage is the disciple Peter. Tabitha had become ill and died. The other disciples called on Peter to help. And help he did. "He turned to the body and said, 'Tabitha, get up.'" And she did.

The news of Tabitha's restored life caused many in the city of Joppa to believe in the Lord. Yes, Peter's role in the miracle was acknowledged, but it was clear that he was a vehicle for the real hero, The Lord himself. Peter's role was to represent the Lord.

Why is this important? Because representing the Lord, particularly in challenging situations, is our role as well. We might not be faced with a death-to-life situation, but we will be faced with situations when a representative of the Lord is asked to step up.

"Is there a doctor in the house?" If you are trained in medicine, you've been in this situation. And people expect you to step forward. And you expect to step forward. You've been trained to do this. You're prepared to respond. And so you do.

"Is there a representative of the Lord in the house?" Maybe to help resolve a dispute. Maybe to pray for healing. Maybe simply to be a friend in a challenging situation. Maybe to call out someone who is clearly in the wrong.

As disciples, we are on call. In the words from today's lesson from Revelation, we "have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Inspired by the willingness of Jesus to give his life – the blood of the lamb – we summon the courage to carry on his ministry of healing.

When healing intervention is needed, we are to step forward, even when we put ourselves in harm's way.

If we choose to worship the Lord day and night with the Lord's temple – again the language from Revelation – we need to expect that we might be called to represent the Lord in challenging situations. And, should we waiver in this call, we need to remember the 23rd Psalm: “Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

Worship, Bible study, outreach, fellowship, civic and national service of all sorts is our training ground. The positive experience that we have as a congregation has a purpose beyond ourselves. We are on call. A call for assistance from a friend, a neighbor, a stranger, anyone who needs help. We might not be Peter raising Tabitha from the dead, but we can be disciples ready to help; with our particular training and skills and insights, and especially our faith in God's love as exhibited in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Now, having noted our responsibility to represent the Lord in difficult circumstances, especially when the one in trouble is hoping that we can help, we must recognize that our presence alone might not alter an outcome. There's a reason why those responsible for pool safety are life-guards rather than life-savers. But that distinction doesn't stop the person from responding to a cry for help and executing his or her training.

You and I gather to take our training to another level. We read from and study Scripture, which is our training manual. We share experiences and circumstances and blessings of all sorts. And we consume the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ. All to keep ourselves in to condition and alert to cries for help.

In today's Gospel, people ask Jesus “What's with you anyway? How long will you keep us in suspense?” In response, Jesus says that “the works that I do in my Father's name testify to me.”

Do the works that you and I do qualify as testimony to who we are as disciples of the Lord? We hope so, don't we. We try to listen carefully to what the Lord wants us to do, and then we try to meet that expectation to the best of our ability.

We can't claim that "the Father and I are one," as Jesus did. But we can claim that "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall fear no evil ... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Yes, there's a reason why Psalm 23 is so powerful. It reminds us of our calling as disciples, as representatives, as life-guards. And, as good listeners. "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me." And often what we hear, when we listen carefully, is not the Lord saying "Here's what I want you to do," but neighbors and strangers saying, "I need your help, please."

And this of course is what you and I have signed up for. "Love your neighbor as yourself." Here's how *Revelation* describes the purpose of our training, the reason why we gather, the point of our discipleship.

"They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Our final hymn today – "Joyful, joyful, we adore thee" – is of course first and foremost about the Risen Christ. He "melts the clouds of sin and sadness" and "drives the dark of doubt away." But guess who's not far behind. It is you and I.

We have signed on to this team. His team. We have trained to help the Lord "melt the clouds of sin and sadness" and "drive the dark of doubt away" and "wipe away tears." It's a very special calling. It's what our mothers have done so often for us.

Now it's our turn. It's what we have signed up for. And we wouldn't want it any other way. We're here, after all. And we're ready for duty. Amen.

Lessons for Fourth Sunday of Easter – May 8, 2022

Collect: O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of our people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Acts 9:36-43

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping, and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

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

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not be in want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures

and leads me beside still waters.

He revives my soul

and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;

for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me;

You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;

you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Second Reading: Revelation 7:9-17

I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

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

Gospel: John 10:22-30

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." Jesus answered "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

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