



Sunday Readings for
June-December 2023
Revised Common Lectionary
Year A B



CHRIST CHURCH, DARTMOUTH
A People United in Justice and Love

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TRINITY SUNDAY: Sunday, June 4th, 2023

Readings GENESIS 1:1-2:4A; PSALM 8; 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11-13; MATTHEW 28:16-20

Collect

Father, we praise you:
through your Word and Holy Spirit you created all things.
You reveal your salvation in all the world
by sending to us Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.
Through your Holy Spirit
you give us a share in your life and love.
Fill us with the vision of your glory,
that we may always serve and praise you,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

First Reading GENESIS 1:1-2:4A

According to Christian doctrine, God is and has always been triune. The church has seen in the ancient Genesis cosmogony the everlasting Trinity at work in creation: God speaks the Word and breathes the divine Spirit over creation.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights - the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night - and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the

great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Psalm 8

O Lord our governor, how exalted is your name in all the world!

Out of the mouths of infants and children your majesty is praised above the heavens.

You have set up a stronghold against your adversaries, to quell the enemy and the avenger.

Second Reading 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11-13

Many Christians over the centuries use this passage from 2 Corinthians as an opening invocation or a closing benediction. Especially beloved is Paul's description of the attributes of the triune God as grace, love, and communion.

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Gospel MATTHEW 28:16-20

Called the Great Commission, the church proclaims this text on Trinity Sunday, affirming that even after

the observance of the Ascension, the triune God is always present in the church. The conclusion of the Gospel of Matthew includes the trinitarian words that most Christians use at baptism: "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Prayer over the Gifts

Living God,
receive all we offer you this day.
Grant that hearing your word and responding to your Spirit,
we may share in your divine life.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Almighty and eternal God,
may we who have received this eucharist
worship you in all we do,
and proclaim the glory of your majesty.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Pentecost 2 (Green) Sunday, June 11th, 2023

Readings GENESIS 12:1-9; PSALM 33:1-12; ROMANS 4:13-25; MATTHEW 9:9-13, 18-26

Collect

O God,
you have assured the human family of eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Deliver us from the death of sin
and raise us to new life in him,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading GENESIS 12:1-9

The semicontinuous readings in the lectionary now include four episodes from the legends of Abraham, the grandfather of Jacob-Israel and thus the patriarchal ancestor of the Israelites. According to the editors of Genesis, Abram obeyed the call of the LORD and migrated from south of Babylon to Canaan, a land given to him by the LORD. Biblical chronology places this migration sometime after 2000 BCE.

Christians have seen in this narrative God's call and promise and Abram's obedience. Verse 8 includes one of several early places in the Pentateuch which record the name LORD, a circumlocution used for YHWH in most English Bibles, which was to be invoked in Israelite worship.

The Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

PSALM 33:1-12

Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous; it is good for the just to sing praises.

Praise the Lord with the harp; play to God upon the psaltery and lyre.

Sing for God a new song; sound a fanfare with all your skill upon the trumpet.

For the word of the Lord is right, and all the works of God are sure.

God loves righteousness and justice; the loving kindness of the Lord fills the whole earth.

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, by the breath of God's mouth all the heavenly hosts.

God gathers up the waters of the ocean as in a water-skin and stores up the depths of the sea.

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all who dwell in the world stand in awe of God.

For God spoke, and it came to pass; God commanded, and it stood fast.

The Lord brings the will of the nations to naught; thwarting the designs of the peoples.

But the Lord's will stands fast for ever, and the designs of God's heart from age to age.

Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord! happy the people chosen to be God's own!

Second Reading ROMANS 4:13-25

Jews, Christians, and Muslims all claim Abraham as their ancient ancestor. For Christians, it is neither Abraham's ethnic identity nor his obedience that is essential, but rather his faith in a God who promises life.

The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")- in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Gospel MATTHEW 9:9-13, 18-26

Jesus not only preaches strict obedience to an intensified law: he also eats with sinners, thus himself breaking the law. So this Sunday Jesus eats with us, who have not always built our house upon him. Our faith can make us well, even if we are bleeding or dying.

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, "Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. And the report of this spread throughout that

district.

Prayer over the Gifts

Merciful God and Father,
in Adam's fall we were born to death;
in the new Adam we are reborn to life.
In all we offer you this day
may we share a taste of your eternal kingdom.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

we have shared in the mysteries
of the body and blood of Christ.
Nourish us by this feast,
that we may live the risen life
and serve you faithfully in the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Pentecost 3 (Green) Sunday, June 18th, 2023

Readings GENESIS 18:1-15 (21:1-7); PSALM 116:1, 10-17; ROMANS 5:1-8; MATTHEW 9:35-10:8 (9-23)

Collect

Almighty God,
without you we are not able to please you.
Mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit
may in all things direct and rule our hearts;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading GENESIS 18:1-15 (21:1-7)

In the second episode of the Abrahamic legends, the LORD promises what seems impossible: the old barren Sarah will bear the son Isaac. The narrative imagines an anthropomorphic God who with two angels, or as three angels, eats with Abraham, and for Hebrew tradition the story demonstrated that God continued to bless Abraham and his descendants. Sarah's pregnancy is one of several in the Bible in which God intervened in nature to affect childbirth. Christians have used Sarah's pregnancy as an example of divine omnipotence and the three visitors as a metaphor for the triune God.

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, "My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and

wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on-since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

[The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." And she said, "Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."]

PSALM 116:1, 10-17

I love the Lord who has heard the voice of my supplication,

I believed, even when I said, "I have been brought very low."

In my distress I said, "No one can be trusted."

How shall I repay you, O Lord for all the good things you have done for me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon your name.

I will fulfil my vows to the Lord in the presence of all the people.

Precious in your sight, O Lord is the death of your servants.

O Lord, I am your servant; I am your servant and the child of your handmaid; you have freed me from my bonds.

I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call upon the name of the Lord.

Second Reading ROMANS 5:1-8

Grounded in the triune God, hearing of faith, peace, grace, hope, and God's love, we are ready to receive the gospel's call to follow Christ.

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Gospel MATTHEW 9:35-10:8 (9-23)

On the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, we heard John's narratives of the call of the first disciples, Andrew and Peter. Matthew lists twelve men, about some of whom the gospels say nothing specific, although Christian tradition commemorated the twelve on designated dates. We stand to hear this gospel, for Jesus is calling us, who are now to proclaim the good news.

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

[Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for that town. See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother

to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."]

Prayer over the Gifts

God of reconciliation and forgiveness,
the saving work of Christ has made our peace with you.
May that work grow toward its perfection
in all we offer you this day.
We ask this in his name.

Prayer After Communion

Holy and blessed God,
as you give us the body and blood of your Son,
guide us with your Holy Spirit,
that we may honour you not only with our lips
but also in our lives.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pentecost 4 (Green) Sunday, June 25th, 2023

Readings GENESIS 21:8-21; PSALM 86:1-10, 16-17; ROMANS 6:1B-11; MATTHEW 10:24-39

Collect

O God our defender,
storms rage about us and cause us to be afraid.
Rescue your people from despair,
deliver your sons and daughters from fear,
and preserve us all from unbelief;
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and ever.

First Reading GENESIS 21:8-21

This third episode in the Abrahamic legends comes from the Elohist source, in which God is called God and is represented by angels. The story gave to the woman Sarah the task of eliminating the polygamous Abraham's oldest son Ishmael so that his younger offspring, her son Isaac, would inherit God's blessing and effect Israelite lineage. A doublet of the tale is in Genesis 16:1-16. Muslims understand themselves as Abrahamic descendants of Hagar and Ishmael, who are saved by God. Christians have seen this story as an example of God providing water in the desert, and Christians now attend to it to acknowledge God's blessings also to Muslims. Not only Sarah was blessed by God.

The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was

weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17

Bow down your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and in misery.

Keep watch over my life, for I am faithful; save your servant who trusts in you.

Be merciful to me, O Lord, for you are my God; I call upon you all the day long.

Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, and abundant in mercy toward all who call upon you.

Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplications.

In the time of my trouble, I will call upon you, for you will answer me.

Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord, nor anything like your works.

All the nations you have made will come and worship you, O Lord, and glorify your name.

For you are great; you do wondrous things; and you alone are God.

Turn to me and have mercy on me; give your strength to your servant, and save the child of your handmaid.

Show me a sign of your favor, so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame; because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

Second Reading ROMANS 6:1B-11

The lectionary now skips part of Romans 5 that is appointed during Lent and proceeds with Paul's teaching about baptism as our connection to the death of Christ. Daily we return to our baptism as the tomb of our old life and the resurrection of life in Christ.

Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel MATTHEW 10:24-39

For Matthew, one's commitment to follow the Father in heaven replaces stereotypical family values. Christian life is encountered on the cross, which believers in some way share with the crucified one.

Jesus said, "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,
you have made our Saviour Jesus Christ
the head of all creation.
Receive all we offer you this day
and renew us in his risen life,
in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Almighty God,
guide and protect your people
who share in this sacred mystery,
and keep us always in your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pentecost 5 (Green) Sunday, July 2nd, 2023

Readings GENESIS 22:1-14; PSALM 13; ROMANS 6:12-23; MATTHEW 10:40-42

Collect

Almighty God,
you have taught us through your Son
that love fulfils the law.
May we love you with all our heart,
all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength,
and may we love our neighbour as ourselves;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading GENESIS 22:1-14

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

Psalm 13

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long shall I have perplexity in my mind,
and grief in my heart, day after day?

How long shall my enemy triumph over me?

Look upon me and answer me, O Lord my God;

give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death;

lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over this one,"

and my foes rejoice that I have fallen.

But I put my trust in your mercy;

my heart is joyful because of your saving help.

I will sing to the Lord who has dealt with me richly;

I will praise the name of the Lord Most High.

Second Reading ROMANS 6:12-23

The church receives the message from Paul as a true word from God: lives of sin lead only to one's own death, but eternal life comes through incorporation into the death of Christ Jesus. Freedom is other than the popular idea that I can do anything I want to do; rather, the freedom of baptism is slavery to the righteousness of Christ.

Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is

sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel MATTHEW 10:40-42

This beloved passage, "Come to me, and I will give you rest," contrasts with the earlier sentence, that Christians are indeed wearing the yoke of Christ. Some Christians have found such biblical passages about the Father's enigmatic will as fundamental to their faith.

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple - truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

Prayer over the Gifts

God of wisdom,
receive all we offer you this day.
Enrich our lives with the gifts of your Spirit,
that we may follow the way of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and serve one another in freedom.
We ask this in his name.

Prayer After Communion

God of power,
we are nourished by the riches of your grace.
Raise us to new life in your Son Jesus Christ
and fit us for his eternal kingdom,
that all the world may call him Lord.
We ask this in his name.

Pentecost 6 (Green) Sunday, July 9th, 2023

Readings Zechariah 9:9-12; PSALM 45:11-17; ROMANS 7:15-25A; MATTHEW 11:16-19, 25-30

Collect

Almighty God,
your Son Jesus Christ has taught us
that what we do for the least of your children
we do also for him.
Give us the will to serve others
as he was the servant of all,
who gave up his life and died for us,

but lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading Zechariah 9:9-12

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

He[a] will cut off the chariot from Ephraim

and the warhorse from Jerusalem;

and the battle-bow shall be cut off,

and he shall command peace to the nations;

his dominion shall be from sea to sea,

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,

I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;

today I declare that I will restore to you double.

Psalm 45: 11-17

The king will have pleasure in your beauty; he is your master; therefore do him honour.

The people of Tyre are here with a gift; the rich among the people seek your favour.”

All glorious is the princess as she enters; her gown is cloth-of-gold.

In embroidered apparel she is brought to her sovereign; after her the bridesmaids follow in procession.

With joy and gladness they are brought, and enter into the royal palace.

“In place of fathers, O king, you shall have sons; you shall make them princes over all the earth.

I will make your name to be remembered from one generation to another; therefore nations will praise you for ever and ever.”

Second Reading ROMANS 7:15-25A

Usually in Paul the Greek word translated as “you” is plural, but in this section, Paul admits to the personal daily struggle of the baptized life. Aware of this “war” within our very selves, we gladly come to the gospel’s word of rest in Christ.

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but

the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Gospel MATTHEW 11:16-19, 25-30

This beloved passage, "Come to me, and I will give you rest," contrasts with the earlier sentence, that Christians are indeed wearing the yoke of Christ. Some Christians have found such biblical passages about the Father's enigmatic will as fundamental to their faith.

Jesus said, "To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Prayer over the Gifts

God of heaven and earth,
receive our sacrifice of praise,
and strengthen us
for the perfect freedom of your service,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Prayer After Communion

O God,
may we who have shared in holy things
never fail to serve you in your world,
and so come to the fullness of joy,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pentecost 7 (Green) Sunday, July 16th, 2023

Readings GENESIS 25:19-34; PSALM 119:105-112; ROMANS 8:1-11; MATTHEW 13:1-9, 18-23

Collect

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless
until they find their rest in you.
May we find peace in your service,
and in the world to come, see you face to face;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading GENESIS 25:19-34

The lectionary now cites four episodes in the story of Jacob-Israel. Again, the LORD intervened in nature so that the barren Rebekah conceived and bore Isaac twin sons. Although Esau was first born, the younger son Jacob inherited God's blessing, and thus once again the cultural expectation of primogeniture was thwarted with the LORD's blessing. This legend was important for the eighth-century Israelites, whose very survival was threatened by enemy conquest. Christians have enjoyed the details of these folk tales and have seen in them illustrations that God's promises are kept.

These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddanaram, sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger." When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.) Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Psalm 119: 105-112

Your word is a lantern to my feet and a light upon my path.

I have sworn and am determined to keep your righteous judgements.

I am deeply troubled; preserve my life, O Lord, according to your word.

Accept, O Lord, the willing tribute of my lips, and teach me your judgements.

My life is always in my hand, yet I do not forget your law.

The wicked have set a trap for me, but I have not strayed from your commandments.

Your decrees are my inheritance for ever; truly, they are the joy of my heart.

I have applied my heart to fulfil your statutes for ever and to the end.

Second Reading ROMANS 8:1-11

The baptized community lives in the Spirit of the crucified Christ. Only in this Spirit can the seed of the word be fruitful. Each Sunday is a reception of this word and a celebration of the food of the Spirit.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Gospel MATTHEW 13:1-9, 18-23

Christians have used Matthew's parable of the sower to honor the preaching of the word and to encourage right and fruitful reception of it.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen! Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when

trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Prayer over the Gifts

Creator God,
your word creates in us a yearning for your kingdom.
Receive all we offer you this day, and keep us in your peace;
for the sake of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Living God,
in this sacrament we have shared in your eternal kingdom.
May we who taste this mystery
forever serve you in faith, hope, and love.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Pentecost 8 (Green) Sunday, July 23rd, 2023

Readings GENESIS 28:10-19A; PSALM 139:1-11, 22-23; ROMANS 8:12-25;
MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43

Collect

Almighty God,
your Son has opened for us
a new and living way into your presence.
Give us pure hearts and constant wills
to worship you in spirit and in truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading GENESIS 28:10-19A

This second episode in the story of Jacob-Israel arises from both Yahwist and Elohist sources. Jacob's dream alludes to Canaanite worship practices in which priests ascended a temple stairway to approach the deity. By contrast, the story states that Israelites receive the blessing of God brought down to them by angels. The name Beth-el, which means house of God, indicates a historical period before the centralization of worship at the Jerusalem temple. The story reiterates God's promises to the line of Jacob. Christians have used this stairway as a metaphor for the cross: God's blessings have come down from above as undeserved grace.

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there

for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place - and I did not know it!" And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called that place Bethel.

PSALM 139:1-11, 22-23

Lord, you have searched me out and known me.

You know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

You trace my journeys and my resting-places and are acquainted with all my ways.

Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, but you, O Lord, know it altogether.

You press upon me behind and before and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain to it.

Where can I go then from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

If I climb up to heaven, you are there; if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

even there your hand will lead me and your mighty hand hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, and the light around me turn to night."

Second Reading ROMANS 8:12-25

The reading from Romans expands this Sunday's picture of God, who is not only the righteous judge, but also the welcoming father. Believers are not only part wheat, part weeds, but also adopted children, who await both divine judgment and glorious freedom.

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh - for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ - if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one

who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Gospel MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43

Much of Matthew's Gospel describes Christians as living in righteousness. Yet the parable of the wheat and the weeds warns against our tendency to identify who is evil and who is good. Christ, the Son of Man, is the judge.

Jesus put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" Then Jesus left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"

Prayer over the Gifts

O God,
accept our praise and thanksgiving.
Help us in all we do
to offer ourselves as a true and living sacrifice;
through Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

O God,
as we are strengthened in these holy mysteries,
may our lives be a continual offering,

holy and acceptable in your sight;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pentecost 9 (Green) Sunday, July 30th, 2023

Readings GENESIS 29:15-28; PSALM 105:1-11, 45C, ROMANS 8:26-39; MATTHEW 13:31-33, 44-52

Collect

O God,
the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy,
increase and multiply upon us your mercy,
that with you as our ruler and guide,
we may so pass through things temporal,
that we lose not the things eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

First Reading 1 Kings 3:5-12

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, 'Ask what I should give you.' And Solomon said, 'You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart towards you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?'

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, 'Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.'

PSALM 119:129-136

Your decrees are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them.

The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

With open mouth I pant, because I long for your commandments.

Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your custom towards those who love your name.

Keep my steps steady according to your promise, and never let iniquity have dominion over me.

Redeem me from human oppression, that I may keep your precepts.
Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes.
My eyes shed streams of tears because your law is not kept.

Second Reading ROMANS 8:26-39

As we ready ourselves to hear Matthew's warning about a final judgment, we rejoice to share Paul's confidence in the overarching love of God is for us. Christ is interceding for us, transforming all things with the paradoxical wisdom of the cross. It is Christ who was slaughtered for us.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel MATTHEW 13:31-33, 44-52

It is too easy to rush through these parables without encountering the surprises: the mustard bush is not, in fact, a great tree; the woman is baking leavened, thus nonreligious, bread; the treasure calls for total commitment; the net includes both eatable fish and trash. Many but not all Christians have literalized Matthew's apocalyptic imagery about punishment following the final judgment.

Jesus put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a

net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Prayer over the Gifts

God of grace,
accept all we offer you this day,
as we look toward the glory you have promised.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

God of grace,
we have received the memorial
of the death and resurrection of your Son.
May your love, poured into us,
bring us to your promises.
We ask this in the name of our Redeemer Jesus Christ.

The Transfiguration of the Lord - (White) Sunday, August 6th, 2023

Readings DANIEL 7:9-10, 13-14; PSALM 99; 2 PETER 1:16-19; LUKE 9:28-36

Collect

Almighty God,
on the holy mount you revealed to chosen witnesses
your well-beloved Son, wonderfully transfigured:
mercifully deliver us from the darkness of this world,
and change us into his likeness from glory to glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading DANIEL 7:9-10, 13-14

Daniel wrote, "As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgement, and the books were opened. As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and

kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed."

Psalm 99

The Lord reigns; let the people tremble; the Lord is enthroned upon the Cherubim; let the earth shake.

The Lord is great in Zion and is high above all peoples.

Let them confess your name, which is great and awesome; you are the Holy One.

"O mighty Sovereign, lover of justice, you have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob."

Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and fall down before the footstool of God; * the Lord is the Holy One.

Moses and Aaron among your priests, and Samuel among those who call upon your name, they called upon you, O Lord, and you answered them.

You spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud; they kept your testimonies and the decree that you gave them.

"O Lord our God, you answered them indeed; you were a God who forgave them, yet punished them for their evil deeds."

Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and worship upon the holy hill of God; for the Lord our God is the Holy One.

Second Reading 2 PETER 1:16-19

We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Gospel LUKE 9:28-36

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days

told no one any of the things they had seen.

Prayer over the Gifts

Holy God,
receive all we offer you this day,
and bring us to that radiant glory
which we see in the transfigured face
of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Holy God,
we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
May we who are partakers of his table
reflect his life in word and deed,
that all the world may know
his power to change and save.
We ask this in his name.

Pentecost 11 (Green) Sunday, August 13th, 2023

Readings GENESIS 37:1-4, 12-28; PSALM 105:1-6, 16-22, 45C; ROMANS 10:5-15;
MATTHEW 14:22-33

Collect

Almighty God,
you sent your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of your Church.
Open our hearts to the riches of your grace,
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love, joy, and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading GENESIS 37:1-4, 12-28

The semicontinuous selections from the Pentateuch now include the beginning and the conclusion of the saga of Joseph, whose adventures provide the explanation for the Israelite memory of a connection with Egypt. Once again, it is not the firstborn son who has preeminence, and the threat to the lineage of Abraham surprisingly turns into blessing. Medieval Christians saw many parallels between Joseph and Jesus. In Joseph being sold into slavery, they saw a picture of Jesus being rejected by many of the Jewish people. The brothers' desire to rid themselves of the beloved son surprisingly becomes God's plan for their salvation.

Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. This is the story of the family of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock

with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron. He came to Shechem, and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him" - that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

PSALM 105:1-6, 16-22

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon the divine name; make known the deeds of the Lord among the peoples.

Sing to the Lord, sing praises, and speak of all the marvellous works of the Lord.

Glory in the holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Search for the strength of the Lord; continually seek the face of God.

Remember the marvels the Lord has done, the wonders and the judgements of the mouth of the Lord,

O offspring of Abraham the servant of God, O children of Jacob the chosen of the Lord.

Then God called for a famine in the land and destroyed the supply of bread.

The Lord sent a man before them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave

They bruised his feet in fetters; his neck they put in an iron collar.

Until his prediction came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him.

The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free.

He set him as master over his household, as a ruler over all his possessions,

to instruct his princes according to his will and to teach his elders wisdom. Hallelujah!

Second Reading ROMANS 10:5-15

We assemble on Sunday to hear the very word of which Paul speaks. Today our faith in Christ saves us; now we hear God's sheer silence; now the storm is stilled.

Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that comes from faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Gospel MATTHEW 14:22-33

Jesus' power over nature, his claim "I am," and his rescue of Peter proclaim that Jesus is divine. The sea is our chaos, Peter's doubt our own. With Peter we ask Jesus to save us, and with the disciples we acclaim him the Son of God. "Do not be afraid," Jesus says both to the disciples in the boat and to the women at the empty tomb.

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Prayer over the Gifts

Loving God,
receive all we offer you this day,
and grant that in this eucharist
we may be enriched by the gifts of the Spirit.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Eternal God,
grant to your Church the unity and peace
that we have tasted in this eucharist,
the fruit of your life-giving Spirit.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Pentecost 12 (Green) Sunday, August 20th, 2023

Readings GENESIS 45:1-15; PSALM 133; ROMANS 11:1-2A, 29-32; MATTHEW 15:10-28

Collect

Almighty God,
you have broken the tyranny of sin
and sent into our hearts the Spirit of your Son.
Give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that all people may know the glorious liberty
of the children of God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading GENESIS 45:1-15

In the concluding scene of the Joseph saga in Genesis, God is credited for having elevated a slave to become a ruler second only to Pharaoh and, through this turn-around, having saved the Israelite clan from starvation during a famine. Even the Egyptians, the epitome of the ancient enemy, benefit from God's actions through Joseph. Such a tale of divine intervention was important for Israelites during and after the exile. Christians have used this story as a picture of the forgiveness embodied in Jesus Christ, an example of God's beneficent care, and a metaphor for the food of the eucharist.

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Send everyone away from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. 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 now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. You must tell my father how greatly I am honoured in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Psalm 133

Oh, how good and pleasant it is, when kindred live together in unity!

It is like fine oil upon the head that runs down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, and runs down upon the collar of his robe.

It is like the dew of Hermon that falls upon the hills of Zion.

For there the Lord has ordained the blessing: life for evermore.

Second Reading ROMANS 11:1-2A, 29-32

This next appointed passage in Romans coordinates well with the first reading and the gospel. Isaiah and Matthew open the tradition to the Gentile, while Paul defends the place of the Jew in the mercy of God.

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew, for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

Gospel MATTHEW 15: 10-28

The optional first half of the reading repeats the Matthean theme of the interiority of righteousness. Such biblical passages were central to the development of the Christian doctrine of sin. The narrative of the Canaanite woman, so odd in its depiction of Jesus, indicates Matthew's understanding that, despite the emphasis on righteousness in the kingdom of heaven, faith in Christ is what saves. Much Christian interpretation has explained away Jesus' talk by claiming he was merely testing her faith, although Matthew does not say this.

Then Jesus called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offence when they heard what you said?" He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Prayer over the Gifts

Loving God and Father,
you have adopted us to be your heirs.
Accept all we offer you this day
and give us grace to live as faithful children.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Eternal God,
we have received a token of your promise.
May we who have been nourished by holy things
live as faithful heirs of your promised kingdom,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pentecost 13 (Green) Sunday, August 27th, 2023

Readings EXODUS 1:8-2:10; PSALM 124; ROMANS 12:1-8; MATTHEW 16:13-20

Collect

Almighty God,

we are taught by your word
 that all our doings without love are worth nothing.
 Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts
 that most excellent gift of love,
 the true bond of peace and of all virtue;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.

First Reading EXODUS 1:8-2:10

This long Exodus passage begins by setting the stage: the ancestral people are pressed into forced labor by the Egyptian Pharaoh; male infants are to be killed; midwives and mothers cleverly evade the law; Moses is hidden in the water and saved by the princess. Repeatedly in the Pentateuch God's actions reverse human expectations: Moses is not killed, but incongruously is saved by the enemy. Christians have seen this story as an archetypal example that God cares for the oppressed, saves the lowliest, and trumps death with life.

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labour. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them. The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, "When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live." Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him, "This must be one

of the Hebrews' children," she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Psalm 124

If the Lord had not been on our side, let Israel now say;

if the Lord had not been on our side, when enemies rose up against us;

then would they have swallowed us up alive in their fierce anger toward us;

then would the waters have overwhelmed us and the torrent gone over us;

then would the raging waters have gone right over us.

Blessed be the Lord who has not given us over to be a prey for their teeth.

We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we have escaped.

Our help is in the name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

Second Reading ROMANS 12:1-8

This Sunday the second reading is well coordinated with the gospel. Paul's description of the body of Christ presents a different picture from Matthew's prescription for the church, yet both refer to the faith in Christ that is the grounding of the church's existence.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Gospel MATTHEW 16:13-20

Every Sunday is Easter, and Peter speaks for us all the resurrection faith: that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Roman Catholics and Protestants have quarreled over the referent of "the rock": yet for all Easter communities who hear this reading, the Rock is Christ, as well as the faith in that Christ and the believers who share that faith. Enlivened by that rock, we will conquer Hades, an archaic way to speak of the realm of death.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Prayer over the Gifts

God of glory,
receive all we offer this day as a symbol of our love,
and increase in us that true and perfect gift.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Living God,
increase in us the healing power of your love.
Guide and direct us
that we may please you in all things,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pentecost 14 (Green) Sunday, September 3rd, 2023

Readings EXODUS 3:1-15; PSALM 105:1-6, 23-26, 45C; ROMANS 12:9-21; MATTHEW 16:21-28

Collect

Author and Giver of all good things,
graft in our hearts the love of your name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us in all goodness,
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading EXODUS 3:1-15

The story of the call of Moses, who is stereotypically a shepherd, is situated at Mount Horeb, another name for Sinai. The terrifying fire of the divine, cited at Sinai, is here a mysterious burning bush, as God

announces plans to free the ancestral people from Egypt and lead them to Canaan. Moses is called to fulfill a mission. The account narrates the revelation of the personal name of God as YHWH, meaning either "I am who I am," or "I will be who I will be." (But see Genesis 4:26.) Most English-language Bibles represent the sacred "four letters," the tetragrammaton, as LORD. Christians have used this story to exemplify God's call to mission and to ground the divine name in mystery and salvation.

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain." But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations."

PSALM 105:1-6, 23-26, 45C

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon the divine name; make known the deeds of the Lord among the peoples.

Sing to the Lord, sing praises, and speak of all the marvellous works of the Lord. 3 Glory in the holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Search for the strength of the Lord; continually seek the face of God.

Remember the marvels the Lord has done, the wonders and the judgements of the mouth of the Lord,

O offspring of Abraham the servant of God, O children of Jacob the chosen of the Lord.

Then God called for a famine in the land and destroyed the supply of bread.

The Lord sent a man before them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave

They bruised his feet in fetters; his neck they put in an iron collar.

Until his prediction came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him.

The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free.

He set him as master over his household, as a ruler over all his possessions,

to instruct his princes according to his will and to teach his elders wisdom. Hallelujah!

Second Reading ROMANS 12:9-21

Reading through Romans, today we encounter a passage with close connections to the appointed gospel. Paul speaks in brutal honesty about the difficulties of life as a Christian and with stunning rhetoric about the body of Christ seeking to overcome evil with good.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Gospel MATTHEW 16:21-28

This Sunday provides the second half of Matthew's comments about the responsibility and attitude of church leadership. The life that Christ offers is the cross, dying to ourselves, thus the opposite of how many human leaders function. All the baptized are carrying the cross on their forehead, wet in baptism, ashed at the outset of each Lent. Yet it is the cross of Christ, not our own, that saves; and our salvation entails the death of our selves. It is a complex reading.

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man

coming in his kingdom."

Prayer over the Gifts

Merciful God,
receive all we offer you this day.
Give us grace to love one another
that your love may be made perfect in us.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Almighty God,
you renew us at your table with the bread of life.
May your holy food strengthen us in love
and help us to serve you in each other.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pentecost 15 (Green) Sunday, September 10th, 2023

Readings EXODUS 12:1-14; PSALM 149; ROMANS 13:8-14; MATTHEW 18:15-20

Collect

Stir up, O Lord,
the wills of your faithful people,
that richly bearing the fruit of good works,
we may by you be richly rewarded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading EXODUS 12:1-14

The second semicontinuous episode from the Exodus narrative is the instructions for keeping Passover as codified in the fifth century BCE. It seems that an earlier nomadic springtime ritual in which, in hope for a year of plenty, a yearling from the flock was sacrificed to the deity in a kind of sympathetic magic, has been historicized so that for Israelite tradition the action of God's salvation in uniting freed slaves into a people is more important than the propagation of the herd. Christians have continued the re-interpretation of symbols by seeing the Israelite ritual of marking the door with the blood of the lamb as fulfilled and perfected in the blood of Christ protecting believers from death. Christians read this ancient narrative to understand why the New Testament calls Jesus the Lamb of God.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number

of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

PSALM 149

Hallelujah! Sing to the Lord a new song; sing the praises of God in the congregation of the faithful.

Let Israel rejoice in their maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their sovereign.

Let them praise the name of the Lord in the dance; let them sing praise to God with timbrel and harp.

For the Lord takes pleasure in this people and adorns the poor with victory.

Let the faithful rejoice in triumph; let them be joyful on their beds.

Let the praises of God be in their throat and a two-edged sword in their hand;

to wreak vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples;

to bind their rulers in chains and their nobles with links of iron;

to inflict on them the judgement decreed; this is glory for all God's faithful people.

Hallelujah!

Second Reading ROMANS 13:8-14

The commandments have not gone away, but they are gathered up into the love seen in Christ's crucifixion and are realized by living in the light of baptism. Christ donned humanity that we may wear Christ. Our holy communion feeds us with strength for the day. As usual, Paul alludes to the power of sinful selfishness.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when

we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Gospel MATTHEW 18:15-20

Christians have used this passage to lay out the process of church discipline and to affirm the power of communal prayer. Most who hear this text on Sunday morning are indeed Gentiles, and in some ways we are all "tax collectors." The gospel is that when we gather, the risen Christ is present in the word, in the sacraments, and in the assembly.

Jesus said, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Prayer over the Gifts

Great and holy God,
accept our offering of labour and love.
May we bring you true and spiritual worship
and be one with you.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Loving God,
your word and sacrament give us food and life.
May we who have shared in holy things
bear fruit to your honour and glory,
in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Pentecost 16/Season of Creation Sunday (Green) Sunday, September 17th, 2023

Readings EXODUS 14:19-31; PSALM 114; ROMANS 14:1-12; MATTHEW 18:21-35

Collect

Almighty God,

you call your Church to witness
 that in Christ we are reconciled to you.
 Help us so to proclaim the good news of your love,
 that all who hear it may turn to you;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.

First Reading EXODUS 14:19-31

Continuing the semicontinuous reading of the Exodus story is Exodus 14:19-31, the miraculous crossing of the sea. The cloud and the fire are manifestations of God. Henotheism is the term that describes a religious view which acknowledges many deities but commands the people to honor only their own deity. This beloved though harsh henotheistic story is an insiders' legend: God has no pity for the soldiers in the Egyptian army, for the LORD is the God of the Hebrew people. As monotheism develops, the story was used to proclaim God's reversal of the values of the world: the slaves escape, and the masters are destroyed. Christians have used this story especially as a metaphor for baptism: God brings us through the water, and we are saved from our enemies of sin and death. Christian movements of liberation focus on this story as a sign of God's care for the oppressed. Verse 21 is intriguing: is the power in Moses' hand, in the LORD, or in a wind? That the biblical text has combined several earlier sources is clear.

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt." Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

PSALM 114

Hallelujah! When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech,

Judah became the sanctuary of the Lord and Israel the dominion of God.

The sea beheld it and fled; Jordan turned and went back.

The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like young sheep.

What ailed you, O sea, that you fled? O Jordan, that you turned back?

You mountains, that you skipped like rams? You little hills like young sheep?

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,
who turned the hard rock into a pool of water and flint-stone into a flowing spring.

Second Reading ROMANS 14:1-12

Paul's refusal to lay down a Christian law and his call to forbearance within the community come as a "word of life" to us as in our own time we fiercely debate conflicted issues. What binds us into one is the death and resurrection of Christ, not uniformity in open questions. We are to trust that it is God who judges.

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God. We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Gospel MATTHEW 18:21-35

This fourth discourse provides a response to the first discourse in Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount: Christians do not, in fact, live in godly perfection, but continuously need the mercy of God and the forgiveness of the community. The use of the imagery of debt suggests that we actually owe to one another both ethical living and gracious forgiveness.

Then Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times,

but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Prayer over the Gifts

Holy God,
accept all we offer you this day.
May we who are reconciled at this table
bring wholeness to our broken world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

God of peace,
in this eucharist we have been reconciled
to you and to our neighbours.
May we who have been nourished by holy things
always have the courage to forgive.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Pentecost 17 Sunday, September 24th, 2023

Readings EXODUS 16:2-15; PSALM 105:1-6, 37-45; PHILIPPIANS 1:21-30; MATTHEW 20:1-16

Collect

Almighty God,
you have created the heavens and the earth,
and ourselves in your image.
Teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and to serve you with reverence and thanksgiving;

through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.

First Reading EXODUS 16:2-15

In this next installment of the Exodus legend comes the description of the freed people hankering after their life of servitude. The ingratitude of the people is met with the graciousness of God: in a manner that maintains Sabbath observance, the Creator sends quails in the evening and manna in the morning. A doublet of this passage is in Numbers 11. The legend helped centuries of Israelites to trust in God's beneficence. Scholars debate what natural edible substance the manna might be recalling: the noun is a pun, meaning "What is it?" And so we too find our question—"What is it?!"—answered by God's gift. Christians have used this story to preach God's care for us and to illustrate the eucharist. On the walls of many medieval churches were parallel paintings that depicted the falling manna and the distribution of communion. In some art, the manna itself was drawn as small round communion hosts.

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?" And Moses said, "When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him - what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord." Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.'" And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'" In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat."

PSALM 105:1-6, 37-45

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon the divine name; make known the deeds of the Lord among the peoples.

Sing to the Lord, sing praises, and speak of all the marvellous works of the Lord.

Glory in the holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Search for the strength of the Lord; continually seek the face of God.

Remember the marvels the Lord has done, the wonders and the judgements of the mouth of the Lord,

O offspring of Abraham the servant of God, O children of Jacob the chosen of the Lord.

You led out your people with silver and gold; in all their tribes there was not one that stumbled.

Egypt was glad of their going, because they were afraid of them.

You spread out a cloud for a covering and a fire to give light in the night season.

They asked, and quails appeared, and you satisfied them with bread from heaven.

You opened the rock, and water flowed, so the river ran in the dry places.

For you, O God, remembered your holy word and Abraham your servant.

So you led forth your people with gladness, your chosen with shouts of joy.

You gave your people the lands of the nations, and they took the fruit of others' toil, that they might keep your statutes and observe your laws.

Hallelujah!

Second Reading PHILIPPIANS 1:21-30

Today's excerpt from Philippians introduces the themes of the letter: joy in the faith and a call for unity. One connection with today's gospel is that only because of God's unending forgiveness for both sides of every quarrel can we accept one another and live in unity.

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well - since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Gospel MATTHEW 20:1-16

Once again, Matthew balances his earlier emphasis on righteous living with the assurance of God's forgiveness. The allegory contradicts the commonplace religious idea that in the afterlife, heaven or hell will be assigned as deserved. In this allegory, God disrupts our notions of reward and punishment by surprising mercy. We receive this mercy already at the table.

Jesus said, "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw

others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Prayer over the Gifts

God of power,
the glory of your works fills us with wonder and awe.
Accept our offering this day,
and help us to live in peace and harmony
with all your creation,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Ruler of the universe,
all creation yearns for its fulfilment in your Son.
May we who have shared in holy things
grow into maturity in him.
This we ask in the name of the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pentecost 18 (Green) Sunday, October 1st, 2023

Readings EXODUS 17:1-7; PSALM 78:1-4, 12-16; PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13; MATTHEW 21:23-32

Collect

Grant, O merciful God,
that your Church,
being gathered by your Holy Spirit into one,
may show forth your power among all peoples,
to the glory of your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading EXODUS 17:1-7

The next installment in the Exodus stories, Exodus 17:1-7, tells of God instructing Moses how to achieve a miraculous source for water. The miracle occurs at God's holy mountain: "Horeb" is what the E and D sources call what the J and P sources call Sinai. "Meribah" means quarrel. Moses' receiving water from the rock is contrasted with his previously having turned the Nile into blood. In the harsher doublet in Numbers 20, Moses defiantly strikes the rock, and he is punished by being deprived admission into Canaan. One version lauds Moses, while the other criticizes his leadership. In a biblical example of Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:4 of this story, "and the rock was Christ." Christians have used this story as a metaphor for baptism. Medieval Christian art depicted side-by-side images of Moses receiving water from the rock and the soldier in John 19:34 piercing Jesus' side, "and at once blood and water came out." The rock was also made parallel to the stone at the opening to Jesus' tomb.

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarrelled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

PSALM 78:1-4, 12-16

Hear my teaching, O my people; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable; I will declare the mysteries of ancient times.

That which we have heard and known, and what our ancestors have told us, we will not hide from their children.

We will recount to generations to come the praiseworthy deeds and the power of the Lord, who has done wonderful works.

God worked marvels in the sight of their ancestors, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan,

splitting open the sea and letting them pass through, making the waters stand up like walls;
leading them with a cloud by day, and all the night through with the glow of fire;
splitting hard rocks in the wilderness, and giving them drink as from the great deep;
bringing streams out of the cliff, and the waters gushing out like rivers.

Second Reading PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13

This important excerpt, appointed also each year on the Sunday of the Passion, includes the early Christian affirmation of Jesus as Lord, in this context meaning Divine Authority. Thus the hymn ties in well with today's gospel. The paradox of the faith is that we see the will of God of which Matthew wrote in Jesus' death on a cross. "Fear and trembling" is a phrase made famous in theology because of the anguished writings of Søren Kierkegaard; yet Paul concludes the phrase with his confidence in God's good pleasure.

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Gospel MATTHEW 21:23-32

Why do we preach and follow Christ? According to today's gospel, we have seen in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ the will of God; in believing in Jesus as the Word of God, we enter God's "kingdom," that is, we participate in the life God offers. From the first century on, Christians have debated about what precisely is "the will of his father." Preaching on Sunday has been a primary method for exploring the will of God.

When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not!'; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he

answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him."

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,
in Jesus Christ we behold your glory.
Receive the offering of your people gathered before you,
and open our hearts and mouths
to praise your great salvation,
the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Lord in heaven,
strengthen the unity of your Church,
so that we who have been fed with holy things
may fulfil your will in the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thanksgiving Sunday (White) Sunday, October 8th, 2023

Readings DEUTERONOMY 8:7-18; PSALM 65; 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15; LUKE 17:11-19

Collect

Creator of the fruitful earth,
you made us stewards of all things.
Give us grateful hearts for all your goodness,
and steadfast wills to use your bounty well,
that the whole human family,
today and in generations to come,
may with us give thanks for the riches of your creation.
We as this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

First Reading DEUTERONOMY 8:7-18

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you.

Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid waste-land with poisonous[a] snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. Do not say to yourself, 'My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.

PSALM 65

You are to be praised, O God, in Zion; to you shall vows be performed in Jerusalem.

To you that hear prayer shall all flesh come, because of their transgressions.

Our sins are stronger than we are, but you will blot them out.

Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there! they will be satisfied by the beauty of your house, by the holiness of your temple.

Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness,

O God of our salvation, O Hope of all the ends of the earth and of the seas that are far away.

You make fast the mountains by your power; they are girded about with might.

You still the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the clamour of the peoples.

Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your marvellous signs; you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.

You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; the river of God is full of water.

You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth.

You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase.

You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty.

May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, and the hills be clothed with joy.

May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; let them shout for joy and sing.

Second Reading 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, 'He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever.' He who supplies seed to

the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

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, they 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.'

Prayer over the Gifts

Source of all life,
the heaven and earth are yours,
yet you have given us dominion over all things.
Receive the symbols of our labour and love
which we offer you this day,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

God of our hope,
in this eucharist we find the source of all your blessings.
Nourished in these holy mysteries
may we, with our lives,
give you continual thanks and praise.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pentecost 20 (Green) Sunday, October 15th, 2023

Readings EXODUS 32:1-14; PSALM 106:1-6, 19-23; PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9; MATTHEW 22:1-14

Collect

Almighty God,

in our baptism you adopted us for your own.
 Quicken, we pray, your Spirit within us,
 that we, being renewed both in body and mind,
 may worship you in sincerity and truth;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.

First Reading EXODUS 32:1-14

Today's story from the nomadic history of Israel tells of the making of the gold calf. Many religious cultures depict masculine divine power with the image of a bull, including Apis in the Egyptian religion and Baal among the Canaanites. Presumably the gold would have come from the escaping slaves having looted their masters. Aaron is said to call this a "festival to the LORD," while Moses functions as mediator, pleading with the angered God to forgive the idolatrous people. The story, in which God is forgiving and Moses has religious authority, presents an antecedent to the worship of Baal described in the later story of Jeroboam's apostasy in 1 Kings 12:25-33. Christians have used this story to illustrate the first commandment, to focus a discussion of what are our idols, and to praise a God who forgives. An idol is opaque and merely reflects ourselves; an icon carries our gaze to the true God beyond.

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord." They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel. The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation." But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it

forever." And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

PSALM 106:1-6, 19-23

Hallelujah! Give thanks to the Lord who is good, whose mercy endures for ever.

Who can declare your mighty acts, O Lord, or show forth all your praise?

Happy are those who act with justice and always do what is right!

Remember me, O Lord, with the favour you have for your people, and visit me with your saving help;

that I may see the prosperity of your elect and be glad with the gladness of your people, that I may glory with your inheritance.

We have sinned as our ancestors did; we have done wrong and dealt wickedly.

Israel made a bull-calf at Horeb and worshipped a molten image;

and so they exchanged their Glory for the image of an ox that feeds on grass.

They forgot you, their saviour, who had done great things in Egypt,

wonderful deeds in the land of Ham, and fearful things at the Red Sea.

So you would have destroyed them, had not Moses your chosen stood before you in the breach, to turn away your wrath from consuming them.

Second Reading PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

Paul once again provides a balance for Matthew: even though there is controversy within the Philippian community, Paul still praises it as his joy and his crown. "The Lord is near": the church recognizes the risen Lord here, in word, sacrament, and assembly.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, to together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Gospel MATTHEW 22:1-14

God calls us to life together, described here as a wedding banquet for the prince. Christians have likened the love of Christ for the church as a marriage and holy communion as the banquet that God provides: recall the wedding imagery in the hymn "Soul, adorn yourself with gladness." Some interpreters have

likened the “wedding robe” to a white garment of baptism, and some Christians have literalized the eschatological metaphors and specify heaven as an everlasting joyous banquet and hell as perpetual weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

Prayer over the Gifts

God of constant love,
in this eucharist you renew the covenant
made once with us in baptism.
As you are faithful in all things
may we, in our offering,
be faithful to our calling.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Faithful God,
in baptism and eucharist we are made one with you.
May we who have shared in holy things
always bear witness to your covenant,
in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord

Pentecost 21 (Green) Sunday, October 22nd, 2023

Readings EXODUS 33:12-23; PSALM 99; 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10; MATTHEW 22:15-22

Collect

Almighty and everliving God,
increase in us your gift of faith,

that forsaking what lies behind
and reaching out to what is before,
we may run the way of your commandments
and win the crown of everlasting joy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading EXODUS 33:12-23

Today's semicontinuous reading also plays with the idea of name. The passage reflects the religious view called henotheism: there are many deities, but to receive divine favor, each tribe must be loyal to its own god. The name of God, YHWH, represented in most English-language Bibles with the circumlocution "the LORD," is defined by mercy. The passage includes the recurrent religious anthropomorphism by suggesting that God has a backside. Also Elijah experiences the presence of God while at a cave's entrance. The narrative reflects the ancient Hebrew idea that to see God is to die: mere humans could not endure God's glory. Yet in the previous passage not included in the semicontinuous selections (Exodus 33:11), which represents a different source from that of verse 23, Moses does converse with the Lord "face to face." Christians have likened the "cleft of the rock" to the "cleft" side of Christ on the cross and to the open tomb at Easter, through which we see the Risen Christ, as much of God as we can bear. The phrase is well-known because of the beloved eighteenth-century hymn "Rock of Ages, cleft for me."

Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favour in my sight.' Now if I have found favour in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favour in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favour in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth." The Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favour in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live." And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

PSALM 99

The Lord reigns; let the people tremble; the Lord is enthroned upon the Cherubim; let the earth shake.

The Lord is great in Zion and is high above all peoples.

Let them confess your name, which is great and awesome; you are the Holy One.

“O mighty Sovereign, lover of justice, you have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.”

Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and fall down before the footstool of God; the Lord is the Holy One.

Moses and Aaron among your priests, and Samuel among those who call upon your name, they called upon you, O Lord, and you answered them.

You spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud; they kept your testimonies and the decree that you gave them.

“O Lord our God, you answered them indeed; you were a God who forgave them, yet punished them for their evil deeds.”

Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and worship upon the holy hill of God; for the Lord our God is the Holy One.

Second Reading 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

Today begins five Sundays of a semicontinuous reading of 1 Thessalonians. Especially if we know the political situation of Thessalonica, the reading from Paul is poignant on this Sunday. In a city famous for its loyalty to the Roman emperor, a young Christian community that is being persecuted is praised as a model of faithfulness to Christ Jesus. Jesus, not Emperor Claudius, is Lord.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Gospel MATTHEW 22:15-22

Jesus' ambiguity in responding to the Pharisees' question resembles the enigmatic parables for which Jesus is known. The “kingdom of heaven” about which Matthew has repeatedly written is not a phenomenon somehow equivalent to the kingdom of Rome. Rather, it is the life shared by those who accept the authority of God. The “head” that we carry is Christ, our “title” is Christian. The ambiguity of Jesus' answer has allowed for great diversity within Christian communities concerning the appropriate attitude toward civil authority.

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,
your word inspires our faith.
May we who offer you our praise
trust you in all things.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

God of peace,
you have nourished us in this sacrament
with the body and blood of Christ.
May we who have taken holy things
keep faith in our hearts and lives,
in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Pentecost 22 (Green) Sunday, October 29th, 2023

Readings DEUTERONOMY 34:1-12; PSALM 90:1-6, 13-17; 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-8; MATTHEW 22:34-46

Collect

Lord God our redeemer,
who heard the cry of your people
and sent your servant Moses
to lead them out of slavery,
free us from the tyranny of sin and death,
and by the leading of your Spirit
bring us to our promised land;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading DEUTERONOMY 34:1-12

This final installment of the Exodus stories is the conclusion of “the Five Books of Moses” and records the death of Moses, who knew the LORD “face to face.” So conclude the lectionary’s stories about Moses, begun ten Sundays ago. The divine spirit has been transferred to Joshua, which is the same name that became Hellenized as “Jesus.” The Bible includes several such geographical delineations of the land promised to Abraham’s descendents. Recently literalist groups of Jews and of Christians cite these parameters in the current controversy about the borders of the State of Israel. Previous to such use of this passage, Christians have used this excerpt to confirm God’s punishment of Moses (see Numbers 20:12) and to give biblical warrant for the church’s transfer of spiritual authority from one leader to the next.

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negeb, and the Plain that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees as far as Zoar. The Lord said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there." Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord's command. He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Bethpeor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigour had not abated. The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended. Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses. Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

PSALM 90:1-6, 13-17

Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born, from age to age you are God.

You turn us back to the dust and say, “Go back, O child of earth.”

For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past and like a watch in the night.

You sweep us away like a dream; we fade away suddenly like the grass.

In the morning it is green and flourishes; in the evening it is dried up and withered.

Return, O Lord; how long will you tarry? Be gracious to your servants.

Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning; so shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

Make us glad by the measure of the days that you afflicted us and the years in which we suffered adversity.

Show your servants your works and your splendour to their children.

May the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us; prosper the work of our hands;
prosper our handiwork.

Second Reading 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-8

Paul's concluding remark, that we share with one another not only the gospel, but also our very selves, is one way to word the dictum "to love our neighbors as ourselves." We give ourselves.

You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

Gospel MATTHEW 22:34-46

The excerpt offers two demonstrations of Christian reliance on the Hebrew Scriptures: Jesus quotes Leviticus on love, and Christians interpret the messianic psalms as referring to Jesus. The necessity for Christians to know the Old Testament is enacted in the lectionary's weekly assignment of readings from the Hebrew Bible and singing of the psalms. The several branches of contemporary Judaism offer varied interpretations of their own scriptures; Christians offer one centered in Jesus.

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Prayer over the Gifts

God of constant love,
you have guided your people

in all times and ages.

May we who offer you our praise today
always be ready to follow where you lead;
we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

God our guide,
you have fed us with bread from heaven
as you fed the people of Israel.
May we who have been inwardly nourished
be ready to follow you all our days;
we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Souls Day (Purple), Thursday November 2nd 2023

Readings WISDOM OF SOLOMON 3:1-9; PSALM 116:1-8; 1 PETER 1:3-9; JOHN 6:37-40 OR JOHN 11:21-27

Collect

Lord of all,
we pray to you for those we love, but see no longer.
Grant them your peace,
let light perpetual shine upon them,
and in your loving wisdom and almighty power,
work in them the good purpose of your perfect will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading WISDOM OF SOLOMON 3:1-9

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them. In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble. They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever. Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect.

Psalm 116:1-8

REFRAIN Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his servants.

I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication, because he has inclined his ear to me whenever I called upon him. R

The cords of death entangled me; the grip of the grave took hold of me; I came to grief and sorrow.

Then I called upon the name of the Lord: "O Lord, I pray you, save my life." R

Gracious is the Lord and righteous; our God is full of compassion.

The Lord watches over the innocent; I was brought very low, and he helped me. R

Turn again to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has treated you well.

For you have rescued my life from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling. R

I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living. R

Second Reading 1 PETER 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith - being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire - may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Gospel JOHN 11:21-27

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you what ever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

Prayer over the Gifts

Gracious and righteous Lord,

we are united in the love of Jesus Christ.
Accept all we offer you this day,
and bring us, with all your faithful people
who have gone before us,
into his eternal glory;
who is Lord, now and for ever.

Prayer After Communion

God of love,
may the death and resurrection of Christ,
which we celebrate in this eucharist,
bring us, with the faithful departed,
into the peace of your eternal home.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
our hope and our salvation.

All Saints Day and Remembrance Sunday (White) Sunday, November 5th, 2023

Readings REVELATION 7:9-17; PSALM 34:1-10; 1 JOHN 3:1-3; MATTHEW 5:1-12

Collect

Almighty God,
whose people are knit together in one holy Church,
the mystical Body of your Son,
grant us grace to follow your blessed saints
in lives of faith and commitment,
and to know the inexpressible joys you have prepared
for those who love you;
through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading: REVELATION 7:9-17

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples 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."

Psalm 34:1-10, 22

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall ever be in my mouth.

I will glory in the Lord; let the humble hear and rejoice.

Proclaim with me the greatness of the Lord; let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me out of all my terror.

Look upon him and be radiant, and let not your faces be ashamed.

I called in my affliction and the Lord heard me and saved me from all my troubles.

The angel of the Lord encompasses those who fear him, and he will deliver them.

Taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are they who trust in him!

Fear the Lord, you that are his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing.

The young lions lack and suffer hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack nothing that is good.

Second Reading 1 JOHN 3:1-3

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Gospel: MATTHEW 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Prayer over the Gifts

Holy and mighty God,
we give you thanks for the triumph of Christ

in the lives of all his saints.
Receive all we offer you this day,
and help us, like them, to run our course with faith,
that we may come to your eternal kingdom.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Lord of hosts,
we praise your glory reflected in your saints.
May we who share at this table
Be filled with the joy of your eternal kingdom,
where Jesus is Lord, now and for ever.

Pentecost 24 (Green) Sunday, November 12th, 2023

Readings JOSHUA 24:1-3A, 14-25; PSALM 78:1-7; 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18; MATTHEW 25:1-13

Collect

Eternal God,
who caused all holy scriptures
to be written for our learning,
grant us so to hear them,
read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,
that we may embrace and ever hold fast
the blessed hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

First Reading JOSHUA 24:1-3A, 14-25

Skipping all the startling, even gruesome stories of the military conquest of Canaan and the allotment of the land to the Israelite tribes, the semicontinuous readings now conclude the book of Joshua with part of the last chapter (24:1-3a, 14-25), in which before his death Joshua assembles the people for a ceremony of the renewal of the covenant: God will be their God, but they must abandon the worship of other deities and obey the commands of the LORD. The omitted verses include a Deuteronomic summary of Israelite history. The chapter emphasizes the belief that God drove out Canaan's inhabitants so that the Israelites could claim the land and its produce. This historical understanding was important to the self-identity of those in the seventh century BCE who wrote Joshua. Most Christians have used this passage as a call for us to renew our baptismal vows to live in obedience to God. This might be a Sunday to include a reaffirmation of baptismal promises.

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors

Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God." But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good." And the people said to Joshua, "No, we will serve the Lord!" Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel." The people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and him we will obey." So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

PSALM 78:1-7

Hear my teaching, O my people; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will declare the mysteries of ancient times.

That which we have heard and known, and what our ancestors have told us, we will not hide from their children.

We will recount to generations to come the praiseworthy deeds and the power of the Lord, who has done wonderful works.

The Lord gave a decree to Jacob and established a law for Israel, commanding them to teach their children;

that the generations to come might know, and the children yet unborn; that they in their turn might tell it to their children;

so that they might put their trust in God, and not forget those mighty deeds, but keep the commandments.

Second Reading 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

The lectionary's appointing 1 Thessalonians during November brings Paul's eschatological predictions to the same Sunday as the parable of the bridesmaids. We who no longer accept a three-tier universe can use this description as a metaphor for the total transformation of the entire cosmos at the arrival of God. Life from God will conquer death.

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Gospel MATTHEW 25:1-13

For millennia humans have told disaster stories about the end. Christians too speak of the coming of the end of things. Yet Christians also see in the resurrection of Jesus Christ already the end of the old and the beginning of the new. Thus we are already the bridesmaids who enjoy the feast, for when praying in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-46), Jesus kept awake for us.

Jesus said, "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Prayer over the Gifts

Gracious God,
your word to us is food indeed.
Receive all we offer you this day,
and let your loving-kindness be our comfort,
for the sake of Jesus Christ, your living Word.

Prayer After Communion

Living God,
in the eucharist you fill us with new hope.
May the power of your love,
which we have known in word and sacrament,
continue your saving work among us,

and bring us to the joy you promise.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pentecost 25 (Green) Sunday, November 19th, 2023

Readings JUDGES 4:1-7; PSALM 123; 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11; MATTHEW 25:14-30

Collect

Almighty God,
you sent your Son Jesus Christ
to be the light of the world.
Free us from all that darkens and ensnares us,
and bring us to eternal light and joy;
through the power of him
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading JUDGES 4:1-7

Today's semicontinuous reading concludes the stories in year A that tell of Israelite history before the rise of the monarchy. The book of Judges, which narrates stories from 1200-1020 BCE, took its written form in the seventh century BCE. The figures we call judges served as both political and military leaders during the decades that Israel invaded, conquered, and settled the land of Canaan. Perhaps the two most well-known judges were Gideon and Samson, but their stories are not included in the lectionary. This single selection from Judges highlights Deborah's role in raising an army to defeat King Jabin of Canaan. The reading was chosen to include a story of a female leader and to broaden the sense of how women served salvation history. Many societies have depicted Justice with a female figure. See also the statuary at the United States Supreme Court. In the New Testament, Christians told many stories of women speaking the word of God, although church history was less clear about whether God continues to call Deborahs as leaders in the community.

The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died. So the Lord sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Haroshethhagoiim. Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years. At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgement. She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'"

Psalm 123

To you I lift up my eyes, to you enthroned in the heavens.

As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, and the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,

so our eyes look to you, O Lord our God, until you show us your mercy.

Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy, for we have had more than enough of contempt, too much of the scorn of the indolent rich, and of the derision of the proud.

Second Reading 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

On this Sunday, it is especially in this second reading that God's good news is proclaimed. It is God's will to save and to keep us in light, so that we may live with Christ. The Christian community shares with one another this encouraging word. Early Christians spoke of baptism as the light within and by which we live; thus we need not fear a life walking "like the blind" (Zeph.1:17).

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Gospel MATTHEW 25:14-30

The English word "talent" meaning a person's natural ability arose in the fifteenth century as preachers allegorized this parable, applying the Roman coins to individual capabilities. A common use of this parable is to stress what Lutherans call "law": we are obligated to use our talents to the best of our ability, or the punishment of hell awaits us. The parable also proclaims what Lutherans call "gospel": all good comes from God, who provides us far more than we need, God's grace given in abundance for our use.

Jesus said, "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you

handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

Prayer over the Gifts

Holy God,
in this eucharist we renew our baptismal covenant.
Help us, through our offering this day,
to renounce all things that draw us from your love.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Gracious God,
in this sacrament
we have shared the body and blood of Christ.
May we who have been nourished by holy things
bear witness to his light,
and share in his eternal priesthood;
for he is Lord for ever and ever.

The Reign of Christ Sunday, November 26th, 2023

Readings Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24; Psalm 95:1-7a; Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:31-46

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
whose will it is to restore all things
in your well-beloved Son, our Lord and King,
grant that the peoples of the earth,

now divided and enslaved by sin,
may be freed and brought together
under his gentle and loving rule;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

Psalm 95:1-7a

O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.

The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed.

O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Second Reading Ephesians 1:15-23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us

who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Gospel Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?

And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,
By your Grace you have raised us up
and enthroned us with Christ in the heavenly realms.
Receive all we offer you this day,
and lead us in those good works
for which you have created us.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Almighty God,
you have made us a royal priesthood

in the kingdom of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Make known his victory through us, we pray,
that all the world may see his light.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

First Sunday of Advent (Blue) Sunday, December 3rd, 2023

Readings ISAIAH 64:1-9; PSALM 80:1-7, 16-18; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-9; MARK 13:24-37

Collect

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life
in which your Son Jesus Christ
came to us in great humility,
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge both the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading ISAIAH 64:1-9

The Isaiah reading is chosen to complement Mark's cosmic imagery of the end of time. God is like fire, earthquake, father, potter. We ask to be saved from "the hand of our iniquity" and returned to the hand of the one who created us.

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence - as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil - to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not

remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

PSALM 80:1-7, 16-18

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up your strength and come to help us.

Restore us, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angered despite the prayers of your people?

You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

You have made us the derision of our neighbours, and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

Restore us, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

They burn it with fire like rubbish; at the rebuke of your countenance let them perish.

Let your hand be upon the one at your side in honour, the one you have made so strong for yourself.

And so will we never turn away from you; give us life, that we may call upon your name.

Second Reading 1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-9

At the start of Advent, the word of God from Paul bids us grace, peace, knowledge, strength, intensified spiritual gifts, and life with the risen Christ. Lutherans see Paul's prayer as "gospel," filled with the good news of life from God.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind - just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you - so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel MARK 13:24-37

Advent begins the liturgical year, and in this year B, gospel readings from Mark complement the festival gospels taken from John. At this beginning we contemplate the end: the arrival of the divine judge means the end of the earth as we know it. In Advent, we are called to ready our lives to receive our disorienting God, for whose arrival we must keep awake. Consider whether already displaying a crèche set, even with its manger empty, may convey not radical surprise but only sweet familiarity—doing the expected thing.

Jesus said, "In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also,

when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake - for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Prayer over the Gifts

God of love and power,
your word stirs within us
the expectation of the coming of your Son.
Accept all we offer you this day,
and sustain us with your promise of eternal life.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

God for whom we wait,
you have fed us with the bread of eternal life.
Keep us ever watchful,
that we may be ready to stand before the Son of man.
We ask this in the name of Christ the Lord.

Second Sunday of Advent (Blue) Sunday, December 10th, 2023

Readings ISAIAH 40:1-11; PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 PETER 3:8-15A; MARK 1:1-8

Collect

Almighty God,
who sent your servant John the Baptist
to prepare your people to welcome the Messiah,
inspire us, the ministers and stewards of your truth,
to turn our disobedient hearts to you,
that when the Christ shall come again to be our judge,
we may stand with confidence before his glory;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading ISAIAH 40:1-11

The passage is chosen to proclaim the Isaiah passage quoted by Mark. We too are like grass, soon to die. Yet we hear the comforting promise that, as we wait for the end of our sufferings, God will care for us like a mother sheep her lambs.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13

You have been gracious to your land, O Lord, you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.

You have forgiven all the iniquity of your people and blotted out all their sins.

I will listen to what you, Lord God, are saying, for you are speaking peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.

Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you, that your glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth shall spring up from the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

Lord, you will indeed grant prosperity, and our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness shall go before you, and peace shall be a pathway for your feet.

Second Reading 2 PETER 3:8-15A

The excerpt from 2 Peter contains both "law" and "gospel": the earth will come to an end, until which we are supposed to live in perfection; but, mercifully, God promises a new creation. We taste the beginning of that new creation at holy communion today.

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in

this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Gospel MARK 1:1-8

By connecting John the Baptist with Elijah, Isaiah, Malachi, and the Jordan, Mark introduces Jesus as the culmination of Jewish tradition. This reading exemplifies the reason that Christians have continued to proclaim the Old Testament, without which countless New Testament references make no sense. So John the Baptist is not a crazed wild man, but like the prophets of old is the mouthpiece of God. The Christ who came, who comes, and who will come brings God's Holy Spirit to us.

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Prayer over the Gifts

God our strength,
we are nothing without you.
Receive all we offer you this day
as you sustain us with your mercy;
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Faithful God,
we thank you for feeding us with this heavenly banquet.
Help us always to hear the prophet's call
to turn our hearts to you;
in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Third Sunday of Advent Sunday, December 17th, 2020

Readings ISAIAH 61:1-4, 8-11; PSALM 126 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24; JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

Collect

God of power and mercy,
you call us once again
to celebrate the coming of your Son.
Remove those things which hinder love of you,
that when he comes,
he may find us waiting in awe and wonder
for him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Because Christians have seen Jesus Christ as the one who embodies the Spirit of God and so transforms the world, this joyous poem is chosen to accompany John's testimony. Jesus brings good news, release, comfort, justice, the covenant, righteousness. And so the poet speaks of the joy of the wedding and the springtime. Last week the Isaiah reading placed us in the wilderness and likened us to dying grass; today we are a forest of oak trees, a sprouting garden.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion - to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Psalm 126

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.

Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses of the Negev.

Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy.

Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, will come again with joy, shouldering their

sheaves.

Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

The baptized assembly has been given the Spirit, which too often is quenched. Paul calls us to live blamelessly according to the will of God. In our weekly intercessions, we attempt Paul's call to pray without ceasing.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

GOSPEL JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

As the northern hemisphere darkens day by day, the Gospel of John points to Christ as the light. Whenever God comes—in the past in the history of Israel and the incarnation of Jesus, in the present in the word and sacrament of each Sunday, and in the future at the end of all things—we join John the Baptist to make a straight path for the Lord.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Prayer over the Gifts

God of hope,
renew in us the joy of your salvation
and make us a living sacrifice to you,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Merciful God,
may this eucharist free us from our sins,
fill us with unending joy,

and prepare us for the birthday of our Saviour.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
who is Lord now and for ever.

Fourth Sunday of Advent Sunday, December 24th, 2023

Readings 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Cantic 18 (Luke 1:47-55); Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Collect

Heavenly Father,
who chose the Virgin Mary, full of grace,
to be the mother of our
Lord and Saviour,
now fill us with your grace,
that we in all things may embrace your will
and with her rejoice in your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

The passage from 2 Samuel is chosen to articulate the royal ideology upon which Luke's narrative depends. Christians see Jesus Christ as the chosen king and the house of God who embodies God's presence on earth.

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you." But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Whenever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you whenever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will

give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Canticle 18, (Luke 1:47-55)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; for he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever.

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.

Second Reading Romans 16:25-27

All of Advent, all of the entire Christian year, is summed up in Paul's concluding doxology. We praise the eternal and only wise God, who is Revealed in Jesus Christ.

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the Revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith - to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

GOSPEL Luke 1: 26-38

Since Mark has no infancy narratives, the lectionary now turns to Luke. The annunciation narrative describes Jesus as coming from God and following King David as a son of God. God is triune: the narrative speaks of the Lord (YHWH), the Holy Spirit, and the Son of God. The imagery of parthenogenesis is intended to indicate that God is the sole source of salvation. We are to follow Mary, in lives of obedient service.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the

throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Prayer over the Gifts

Gracious God,
by the power of the Spirit
who sanctified the mother of your Son,
make holy all we offer you this day.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord

Prayer After Communion

Faithful God,
in this sacrament we receive the promise of salvation.
May we, like the Virgin Mary,
be obedient to your will.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Christmas Eve December 24th 2023

Collect

Almighty God,
you wonderfully created
and yet more wonderfully restored our human nature.
May we share the divine life of your Son Jesus Christ,
who humbled himself to share our humanity,
and now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading Isaiah 9:2-7

That the angels in Luke name the child the Messiah, in Greek "Christ," recalls oracles such as Isaiah 9, and Christians have seen in Jesus Christ the ancient promises of a coming king fulfilled. Jesus is "wonderful Counselor and mighty God" among us. Thus Christians hear in this oracle references to the triune God.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Psalm 96

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the whole earth.

Sing to the Lord and bless his name; proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day

Declare the glory among the nations and the wonders of God among all peoples.

For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; he is more to be feared than all gods. As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; but it is the Lord who made the heavens.

Oh, the majesty and magnificence of your presence! Oh, the power and the splendour of your sanctuary!

Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples; ascribe to the Lord honour and power.

Ascribe to the Lord the honour due the divine name; bring offerings and come into the courts of the Lord.

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth tremble before God.

Tell it out among the nations: “The Lord reigns! The Lord who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy before the Lord who is coming, who is coming to judge the earth.

The Lord will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth.

Second Reading Titus 2:11-14

As is often the case, the second reading indicates the implications of the gospel for the church: the appearance of God in Jesus Christ creates a people redeemed, purified, and dedicated to a life of good works. Christ among us changes our identity, our style of life, and the goal of our existence.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our

great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

GOSPEL LUKE 2:1-14 [15-20]

Luke 2, the only biblical narrative detailing the birth of Jesus, is proclaimed at the first eucharist of Christmas. In contrast to Matthew's interest in high status males, Luke emphasizes the opposite: a pregnant woman, "no place in the inn," and lower-class shepherds. Thanks in part to Luke's talent in storytelling, this narrative has become for many people synonymous with Christmas. The challenge at this service is to proclaim the truth of this narrative as other than and far beyond stereotypical sentimentality.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"

[When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.]

Prayer over the Gifts

God of peace, your Son Jesus Christ has reconciled us to you.

May all we offer you today

renew us as members of your household.

We ask this in his name.

Prayer After Communion

Creator God of all,
the child born for us is the Saviour of the world.
May he who made us your children
welcome us into your kingdom,
where he is alive and reigns with you now and for ever.

Christmas Day December 25th 2023

Collect

Almighty God,
you wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored our human nature. May we share the divine life of your Son Jesus Christ, who humbled himself to share our humanity, and now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 52:7-10

Christians see in this passage from Second Isaiah, which directly precedes the Suffering Servant poem appointed for Good Friday, a way to speak about Jesus, whose birth near Jerusalem embodied the reign of God and brought salvation to the world.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Psalm 98

The third of the enthronement psalms that Christians sing at Christmas is Psalm 98. Isaiah 52 has proclaimed, "Break forth together into singing," and we do, singing "a new song of the Lord." Christ has brought us victory. All lands, trumpets and horns, even rivers and hills are applauding the birth of Christ. Anticipating John 1, we speak of Christ as the holy arm of God.

O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory.

The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.

He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it.

Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy

at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Now and forever. Amen.

Second Reading: Hebrews 1:1-4

The beautifully written introduction to Hebrews offers worshipers yet more profound language with which to picture the meaning of Jesus Christ. The Son of God, he was with God at the creation of the world; on earth he was the powerful divine word; and now he reigns with God over all things. At Christmas we praise Christ, not only an infant, but indeed the very God.

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the Reflection: of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

GOSPEL: John 1:1-14

Especially John's gospel guided the church into the mystery of the incarnation: the Jesus whose birth the church celebrates at Christmas is the Word of God, indeed God in the flesh. On Christmas Day the church moves from the beloved narrative of Bethlehem to the central conviction of the Christian faith, that Jesus is God from before the creation of the world. Christmas celebrates God alive in glory and active among humankind. The lectionary appoints Genesis 1, "In the beginning," at Easter, and John 1, "In the beginning," at Christmas.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.