



CHRIST CHURCH
DARTMOUTH

An Inclusive Church Welcoming Everyone.

Sunday Readings, Collects, and Prayers

for 2021

May to September

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The Day of Pentecost Sunday, May 23

Readings: Acts 2:1-21, Psalm 104:25-35, 37B; Romans 8:22-27 John 15:26-27, 16:4B-15

Collect

Creator Spirit,
make the dry bones of our lives
live and breathe and grow again.
Pour out your Spirit upon the whole creation.
Come in rushing wind and flashing fire
to turn the sin and sorrow within us
into faith, power and delight.
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: Acts 2:1-21

The narrative of Pentecost exemplifies Luke's expert storytelling ability. The reading includes hidden references to the Hebrew Bible, a citation from the prophets, a contemporary geography lesson, an account of miracles, and the folksy detail of the accusation of drunkenness. As we await the eschatological end of all things, we are now those who prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams. Although some Christians connect glossolalia with Pentecost, Luke describes these "tongues" as other languages with which to evangelize the world.

When the day of Pentecost had come, the apostles were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs - in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire,

and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Psalm 104:25-35

The psalm for the day, Psalm 104:24-34, 35b, is a psalm in which it is usual to translate the Hebrew of verse 30 with the term "Spirit," rather than "breath" or "wind." The psalm praises God the creator, whose Spirit continually creates all that lives. Verses 27-28 have become part of a common table prayer. In an example of the lectionary's use of the Bible, the condemnation of verse 35a is omitted.

Yonder is the great and wide sea with its living things too many to number, creatures both small and great.

There move the ships, and there is that Leviathan, which you have made for the sport of it.

All of them look to you to give them their food in due season.

You give it to them; they gather it; you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.

You hide your face, and they are terrified; you take away their breath, and they die and return to their dust.

You send forth your Spirit, and they are created; and so you renew the face of the earth.

May your glory, O Lord, endure for ever; may you rejoice in all your works;

you look at the earth and it trembles; you touch the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will praise my God while I have my being.

May these words of mine please you; I will rejoice in the Lord. Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Romans 8:22-27

We and the whole creation are groaning in labor, awaiting the birth of God's new age in which Christ's resurrection will renew all things. Until that end time, we have the Spirit who is praying for us before 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. 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.

Gospel: John 15:26-27, 16:4B15

The Gospel of John is appointed for most of the primary festivals of the liturgical year because of John's high Christology and its centrality in the development of Christian doctrine. John says theologically the narrative of Pentecost: God sends the Spirit into the gathered community so that they can know the truth of Christ's resurrection. Christian theology subsumed John's description of the Advocate into its understanding of the Holy Spirit, and passages such as this led to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Spirit is now the link between the believing community and God.

Jesus said to the disciples, "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning. I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

Prayer over the Gifts

Giver of life,
receive all we offer you this day.
Let the Spirit you bestow on your Church
continue to work in the world
through the hearts of all who believe.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

Loving God,
may we who have received this eucharist
live in the unity of your Holy Spirit,
that we may show forth his gifts to all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Trinity Sunday, May 30th, 2021

Readings: Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17

Collect

Enfolding God, Trinity of love,
you are our source, our goal, our life:
may we be born again in you,
no more to live alone and unconnected,
but, sharing the Spirit's breath,
be carried to your heart;
through Jesus Christ, who lifts us up. Amen.
Prayers for an Inclusive Church (2009) alt.

First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8

On Trinity Sunday, Isaiah's vision calls us to experience the overpowering presence of the almighty God. If our language about God has not left us speechless, it has not worked well to articulate divine power and mercy. Christians have seen in the triple "Holy" an oblique reference to the Trinity (see Rev. 4:8). Like Isaiah, we encounter God in worship, and like Isaiah, we are sent.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

Psalm 29

Having heard Isaiah's transformative vision, we respond by singing Psalm 29, which praises the Lord, that is YHWH, with phrases that appear to have been adapted by the Israelites from the worship of the Canaanite weather deity Baal. The psalm moves from the image of a storm god to one who blesses the people with peace. Thus the psalm parallels the movement of Isaiah 6.

Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due the divine name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendour.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon, and makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire; the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare. And in the temple of the Lord all are crying, "Glory!"

The Lord sits enthroned above the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as sovereign for evermore.

The Lord shall give strength to this people; the Lord shall give this people the blessing of peace

Second Reading: Romans 8:12-17

This passage from Paul contains early trinitarian theology. God is addressed as Abba, which probably meant "Papa." Christ "the Son" ensures our adoption as sons and daughters. The Spirit enlivens our prayers. For Paul, we are already dead and have been made alive in Christ.

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.

Gospel: John 3:1-17

On Trinity Sunday, Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus presents us with John's language for the triune God: God; the Son, who is the only begotten one; and the Spirit, of whom the believers are born. This is expansive imagery of God: the Spirit of God as a womb amplifies the language of God as the Father of the Son.

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of

God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

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.

Second Sunday after Pentecost, June 6, 2021

Readings: 1 Samuel 8:4-11, 16-20, Psalm 138; 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1; Mark 3:20-35

Collect

Gracious God,
give us such a vision of your purpose
and such an assurance of your love and power
that we may ever hold fast to the hope
we have in Jesus Christ our Lord;
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.
A Prayer Book for Australia (1995) alt.

First Reading: 1 Samuel 8:4-11, 16-20

Reading semicontinuously through 1 Samuel, we come to the story of Israel's decision to mimic their neighbors by merging their tribes into a monarchy. Israel consolidated into a monarchy in about 1050 bce. Although parts of the books of Samuel attest God's actions for and through the kings, the final redactor expresses the theological judgment that the desire for a monarch was lack of trust in God, which then helps explain why the monarchy soon failed. The full reading includes a stunning description of the horrors of absolute monarchs. Indeed, by the time of Solomon, the king maintained a massive harem and used forced labor to construct self-aggrandizing buildings. Christians have used this passage to illustrate our problematic desire to be like our neighbors and our willingness to trust unreliable human institutions, both of which may indicate lack of faith in God. For Christians, Christ is our king: he "goes out before us and fights our battles."

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to govern us." Samuel prayed to the Lord, and the Lord said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. Just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. Now then, listen to their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." So Samuel reported all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots.

He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but

the Lord will not answer you in that day." But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; they said, "No! but we are determined to have a king over us, so that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles."

Psalm 138

Responding to the story of the desire for a king, we sing Psalm 138, through which we praise God as our monarch, whose name is exalted above everything. As sovereign, our God cares for the lowly, which Samuel warned that a human king would not do.

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise.

I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name, because of your love and faithfulness; for you have glorified your name and your word above all things.

When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me.

All the rulers of the earth will praise you, O Lord, when they have heard the words of your mouth.

They will sing of the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord.

Though you are high, you care for the lowly; you perceive the haughty from afar.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your mighty hand shall save me.

O Lord, you will make good your purpose for me; your love endures for ever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

Today's reading of 2 Corinthians hears Paul urging us, despite contemporary afflictions, to believe in Jesus, who will bring us into his presence. In worship we are already in Christ's presence. The church itself has been described as the building that God has constructed. We hope to stand, not only with the woman and the man, naked and ashamed of our sin, but also with Jesus, to the glory of God.

But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—"I believed, and so I spoke"—we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory

beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Gospel: Mark 3:20-35

What is the power upon which we rely? Mark asks us to take with utter seriousness the power of evil and to trust with all those who do the will of God that Jesus embodies the power of God. The claim that there is a sin that cannot be forgiven contrasts with other biblical passages that indicate that God will always forgive.

The crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain Jesus, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered. Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" - for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit." Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Prayer over the Gifts

Merciful God,
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

O God,
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

Readings for May 23 to September 5, 2021 (Liturgical Year B)

and serve you faithfully in the world.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Third Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, June 13th, 2021

Readings: 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13; Psalm 20; 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17; Mark 4:26-34

Collect

Creating God,
you make all things new.
Plant seeds of confidence and gladness in our hearts,
so that, trusting your word,
we may live no longer for ourselves
but for him who died and was raised for us,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: Samuel 15:34-16:13

Reading semicontinuously through 1 Samuel, we come to the story of Samuel's countercultural choice of David, who is the youngest son, rather than the firstborn son of nobility, to be a better king than was Saul. Part of the purpose behind these stories is to present the Davidic monarchy as divinely established. The description of David as a shepherd connects him both to Israel's nomadic past and to ancient Near Eastern metaphors of the king as a shepherd. Christians have used the story of the anointing of David as a precursor of the Spirit anointing Jesus at his baptism, and many Christians anoint with oil in the ritual of baptism, in which all believers are granted the Spirit of God. That David is the youngest son can link with the image of the mustard bush, God using the lowest in surprising ways.

Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel. The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the Lord said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you." Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?" He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord." But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There

remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Psalm 20

Responding to the story of the anointing of David, we sing Psalm 20, a royal psalm that prays for God's blessing on the king. It is as if we are cheering David on, but we also are acknowledging that Christ is the Lord's anointed. In the resurrection is Christ's victory.

May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend you;

send you help from the holy place of the Lord and strengthen you out of Zion;

remember all your offerings and accept your burnt sacrifice;

grant you your heart's desire and prosper all your plans.

We will shout for joy at your victory and triumph in the name of our God; may the Lord grant all your requests.

Now I know that you, O Lord, give victory to your anointed, whom you will answer out of the heavenly realms with the victorious strength of your mighty hand.

Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God.

They collapse and fall down, but we will arise and stand upright.

O Lord, give victory to your anointed and answer us when we call.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17

Christians have developed each of Paul's hints about human destiny by means of the belief in the immortality of the soul, the final judgment, and the death and resurrection of Christ as the transformative power of God in the present. Christians have proposed a variety of ways that these religious ideas cohere.

We are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord - for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for

what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Gospel: Mark 4:26-34

With the mustard seed parable, Mark is not presenting the stereotypical image of the small-become-great. Rather, in the cross and resurrection of Christ, what looks to the world like an annual bush, grown only for flavoring, is actually recognized by believers as the cosmic tree of life. The church itself cannot explain the growth of the seed: the mystery lies in the power of God.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come." He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

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.

National Indigenous Day of Prayer, Sunday June 20th, 2021

Readings: Isaiah 40:25-31, Psalm 19, Philippians 4:4-9, John 1:1-18

Collect

Creator God,
from you every family in heaven and earth takes its name.
You have rooted and grounded us
in your covenant love,
and empowered us by your Spirit
to speak the truth in love,
and to walk in your way towards justice and wholeness.
Mercifully grant that your people,
journeying together in partnership,
may be strengthened and guided
to help one another to grow into the full stature of Christ,
who is our light and our life.

First Reading: Isaiah 40:25-31

To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host
and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in
power, not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden
from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God”: Have you not known? Have you not
heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not
faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and
strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall
exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up
with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Psalm 19

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork.

One day tells its tale to another, and one night imparts knowledge to another.

Although they have no words or language, and their voices are not heard,

Their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message to the ends of the world.

In the deep has he set a pavilion for the sun; it comes forth like a bridegroom out of his
chamber; it rejoices like a champion to run its course.

**It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens and runs about to the end of it again;
nothing is hidden from its burning heat.**

The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the innocent.

The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light to the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold, sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.

By them also is your servant enlightened, and in keeping them there is great reward.

Who can tell how often he offends? cleanse me from my secret faults.

Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not get dominion over me; then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a great offense.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-9

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 honorable, 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: John 1:1-18

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. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Prayer over the Gifts

Creator, you bless us
with many good gifts
returned to you from your creation.
Feed us with the Bread of Life,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer After Communion

Great Creator, you have fed us with bread from heaven.
continue to renew us in your truth,
to give light to our minds
strength to our bodies,
and seal us with your Holy Spirit.
We ask this in Christ's name. Amen.

The Sunday Before Canada Day, June 27th, 2021

Readings: Isaiah 32.1-5, Colossians 3.12-17, Psalm 85.7-13, John 15.12-17

Collect

Almighty God,
whose wisdom and whose love are over all,
accept the prayers we offer for our nation.
Give integrity to its citizens
and wisdom to those in authority,
that harmony and justice may be secured
in obedience to your will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading: Isaiah 32.1-5

See, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice. Each will be like a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land. Then the eyes of those who have sight will not be closed, and the ears of those who have hearing will listen. The minds of the rash will have good judgment, and the tongues of stammerers will speak readily and distinctly. A fool will no longer be called noble, nor a villain said to be honorable.

Psalm 85.7-13

Show us your mercy, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.

I will listen to what the Lord God is saying, for he is speaking peace to his faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to him.

Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him, that his 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.

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

Righteousness shall go before him, and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.

Second Reading: Colossians 3.12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord^[a] has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ^[b] dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.^[c] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Gospel: John 15.12-17

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants^[a] any longer, because the servant^[b] does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Prayer over the Gifts

Judge eternal,
accept all we offer you this day,
and grant to our nation unity and peace.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Prayer After Communion

God of love,
may we who taken holy things
grow in the unity and peace.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 4th, 2021

Readings: 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10; Psalm 48; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13

Collect

God of the prophets,
in every age you send the word of truth, familiar yet new.
Let us not be counted among those who lack faith,
but give us vision to see Christ in our midst
and to welcome your saving word.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever. Amen.
Opening Prayers (1997) alt.

First Reading: 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

This Sunday's installment in the Davidic narrative tells of the anointing of David, already king of Judah, to be also king of Israel. Written some three hundred years after David's reign (ca. 1000–970 bce) and probably relying on earlier court documentation, the account credits David's success to the power of God. Christians have used such descriptions of the good king as fully realized only in Jesus Christ, who was anointed by God and became shepherd and ruler of all who believe.

Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh. For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel." So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years. David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inward. And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.

Psalm 48

Responding to the description of King David's reign, we join in singing Psalm 48, which praises God as the power behind the throne. "Zion" is a poetic name for Jerusalem when described in magnificent and salvific ways. For Christians, Zion refers both to the church, the place on earth where God dwells, and to the heavenly realm of the Almighty.

Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised; in whose city is the holy hill of God.

Beautiful and lofty, the joy of all the earth, is the hill of Zion, the very centre of the world and the city of the great sovereign.

God is in its citadels and is known to be its sure refuge.

Behold, the rulers of the earth assembled and marched forward together.

They looked and were astounded; they retreated and fled in terror.

Trembling seized them there; they writhed like a woman in childbirth, like ships of the sea when the east wind shatters them.

As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God; God has established it for ever.

We have waited in silence on your loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of your temple.

Your praise, like your name, O God, reaches to the world's end; your hand is full of justice.

Let Mount Zion be glad and the cities of Judah rejoice, because of your judgements.

Make the circuit of Zion; walk round about it; count the number of its towers.

Consider well its bulwarks; examine its strongholds; that you may tell those who come after.

This God is our God for ever and ever, who shall be our guide for evermore.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

Religion is filled with individuals who claim authority because of their personal visions. Here Paul claims only the power of the grace of Christ.

I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then

I am strong.

Gospel: Mark 6:1-13

We hear in this passage both “law” and “gospel”: we too are skeptical and unbelieving, and yet Jesus heals us. Even Jesus could do no mighty work, and yet he healed. We are sent out to continue the work of Jesus, proclaiming the power of God over the powers of all the world’s demons.

Jesus came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offence at him. Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

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.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost July 11th, 2021

Readings: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12B-19; Psalm 24; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

Collect

God of the prophets,
whose word cuts through the webs of power
and holds the tyrant to account:
be with all who raise their voice against oppression and misrule,
who are imprisoned and abused for freedom's sake;
help us to stand and speak with them
and witness to your kingdom now;
through Jesus Christ, the name above all others. Amen.
Prayers for an Inclusive Church (2009)

First Reading: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12B-19

Continuing in the Davidic narrative, the readings come to the story of David receiving the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem and dancing before it in ecstatic joy. The lectionary edits out the verses that tell of God striking Uzzah dead for having touched the ark in trying to steady it on its cart. This exemplifies the fact that Christians read some parts of the Bible in the assembly, but not other parts. The ark of the covenant was a gold-plated wooden box about 4 x 2.5 x 4 feet, in which was kept particularly revered items of Israelite faith, such as the tables of the law. It symbolized the presence of God, who was said to meet Israel above this box to manifest the covenant. The ark seems to have been utilized during Israel's nomadic period until it disappears from record about 587 bce, albeit the biblical references to the ark are sketchy. (Today's Ethiopian Orthodox Christians claim to guard the ark in the city of Aksum.) Some Christians have used this passage as warrant for celebrative worship styles. Christians have replaced the ark with the book of the scriptures and the bread and wine of holy communion as manifestations of the presence of God.

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty-thousand. David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom to the city of David with rejoicing; and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart. They brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, inside the tent that

David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord. When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

Psalm 24

Having heard about David's joyful reverence for the Ark, we respond by singing Psalm 24, a poem that after David's time accompanied the Israelites as they processed to the temple. We dance with David, we process with the Israelites, and we receive the bread and wine in our hands.

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and all who dwell therein.

For it is God who founded it upon the seas and made it firm upon the rivers of the deep.

“Who can ascend the hill of the Lord and who can stand in the holy place of God?”

“Those who have clean hands and a pure heart, who have not pledged themselves to falsehood, nor sworn by what is a fraud.

They shall receive a blessing from the Lord and a just reward from the God of their salvation.”

Such is the generation of those who seek you, of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O gates; lift them high, O everlasting doors; and the One who reigns in glory shall come in.

“Who is this glorious One?” “The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle.”

Lift up your heads, O gates; lift them high, O everlasting doors; and the One who reigns in glory shall come in.

“Who is this glorious One?” “The Lord of hosts, the Lord who reigns in glory.”

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

Today begins seven Sundays of a semicontinuous reading of Ephesians. Which of the twenty-two phrases in this reading can be highlighted today? Being blessed by Christ, holy and blameless, adopted as God's children, and marked with the seal of the Spirit, we who are baptized can praise God's glory and face down the Herods of this world.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Gospel: Mark 6:14-29

The sex and violence hinted at in this narrative have led to its popularity with artists. For believing Christians it can be a picture of the lengths to which political injustice might go toward its self-protection and of the possibility that Christian faithfulness can lead to persecution. Christ, to whom John points and whom he prefigures, is both the one who preaches against injustice and the one whose head was on the platter for us. Our weekly meal contrasts with Herod's banquet.

King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her.

Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Prayer over the Gifts

Loving 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.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, July 18th, 2021

Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1-14A; Psalm 89:20-37; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Collect

Compassionate God,
from far and near you gather your church into one,
safeguard the unity of your flock
through the teaching of Christ the Shepherd,
so that all your scattered children may find in him
the guidance and nourishment they seek. Amen.

Opening Prayers (1997)

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-14A

Although it was usual in the ancient Near East for the temple to be next to the palace, as a sign that the deity supported the monarchy, the Jerusalem temple was not built until the reign of David was over and Solomon was king. However, God blesses David's dynasty as if it itself is a house for God. Christians have used passages such as this when describing Jesus Christ as David's offspring, the ultimate king, God's house, and the son of God. It was customary for monarchs in the ancient Near East to be called the son of God. Nathan's references to shepherding (v. 7) and rest (v. 11) connect well with today's gospel.

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. Wherever 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 wherever 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. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.

Psalm 89:20-37

Hearing the richness of the 2 Samuel 7 reading, we respond by singing Psalm 89:20-37. In this royal psalm David is lauded as God's servant who calls God Father. For Christians, Christ is the new David, to whom all these descriptors apply in fullness.

I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him.

My hand will hold him fast and my arm will make him strong.

No enemy shall deceive him, nor any wicked one bring him down.

I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

My faithfulness and love shall be with him, and he shall be victorious through my name.

I shall make his dominion extend from the Great Sea to the River.

He will say to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation'

I will make him my firstborn and higher than the rulers of the earth.

I will keep my love for him for ever, and my covenant will stand firm for him.

I will establish his line for ever and his throne as the days of heaven.

If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my judgements;

if they break my statutes and do not keep my commandments;

I will punish their transgressions with a rod and their iniquities with the lash;

but I will not take my love from him, nor let my faithfulness prove false.

I will not break my covenant, nor change what has gone out of my lips.

Once for all I have sworn by my holiness: 'I will not lie to David.

His line shall endure for ever and his throne as the sun before me;

It shall stand fast for evermore like the moon, the abiding witness in the sky.'

Second Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

Today, with the author of Ephesians, we can say that there is no more dividing wall between different flocks. Christ the shepherd is our peace, the single cornerstone on which the church builds.

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision" - a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands - remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have

been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Gospel: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Without ridiculing sheep, which the Bible never does, we can understand ourselves as like sheep: we are God's creatures, the divine flock, nurtured to serve the community with food and clothing, always needing the care of a shepherd. The word pastor means shepherd. Jesus and his disciples rarely rest, since there is a perpetual need for them to teach and heal. We are the sheep requiring God's care, we are those who touch the fringe of his cloak for healing. The words and the food of this morning are like the fringes of his cloak.

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

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.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, July 25th, 2021

Readings: 2 Samuel 11:1-15; Psalm 14; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21

Collect

Sustainer of the hungry,
like a mother you feed your children
until each is satisfied.
Turn our eyes to you alone,
so that, aware of our own deepest longings,
we reach out with Christ
to feed others with the depth of your love. Amen.
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: 2 Samuel 11:1-15

Continuing through the Davidic narratives, this Sunday's selection is the well-known tale of David's adultery with Bathsheba. In the Old Testament, adultery was sexual intercourse between a man and any woman who was married to another man. Since David was king, this could hardly have been what we call consensual sex. "Feet" is a Hebrew euphemism for genitals. As with other Old Testament narratives about adultery, this one is not met with a death sentence. It is likely that this story entered the record to certify the reign of Solomon, who was a son of Bathsheba. To our ears the story shouts of patriarchal privilege, higher men exerting power over lesser men and over all women. Christians have used this story to illustrate human sinfulness, even of persons especially chosen by God.

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that

day. On the next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die."

Psalm 14

We respond to the story of David's adultery by singing Psalm 14. The first referent of "fool" is David, but we come along close behind. All have gone astray: David's story is ours. Yet we pray for forgiveness and restoration.

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." All are corrupt and commit abominable acts; there is none who does any good.

The Lord looks down from heaven upon us all, to see if there is any who is wise, if there is one who seeks after God.

Every one has proved faithless; all alike have turned bad; there is none who does good; no, not one.

Have they no knowledge, all those evildoers who eat up my people like bread and do not call upon the Lord?

See how they tremble with fear, because God is in the company of the righteous.

Their aim is to confound the plans of the afflicted, but the Lord is their refuge.

Oh, that Israel's deliverance would come out of Zion! when the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice and Israel be glad.

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

At the table of holy communion, we are "filled with all the fullness of God." The saying goes, one is what one eats. (It is memorable in the German: Man ist was Man isst.) God's food strengthens us through the Spirit to live in faith and love.

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints,

what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel: John 6:1-21

Christ feeds the hungry with a full diet of bread and fish. Yet John's purpose is not to suggest that believers will be miraculously fed by a wondrous king. This prophet, this I Am, is himself all we need for life. It is as if this Sunday is Passover, our journey from death to life.

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

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.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 1st, 2021

Readings: 2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:13, Psalm 51:1-12, Ephesians 4:1-16, John 6:24-35

Collect

God of the lowly and the mighty,
even when we harm and destroy one another,
you offer us forgiveness of our sins
if we but open our hearts to your grace and mercy,
so that we may build up one another in love. Amen.
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: 2 Samuel 11:2-12:13

Today's excerpt concludes the story of David's adultery. Our distance from the biblical culture is seen when Nathan tells David that God will take his wives away from him and give them to his neighbor. The parable implies that since men owned their wives, David is guilty of theft. Also, the detail omitted from these selections that the son born to Bathsheba dies indicates that in the polygamous biblical worldview, children also were the property of men: thus the father is punished by the death of his son. Christians have generally avoided comment on the alien ethics contained within this narrative and have used it as a picture of repentance. David's sin, and ours, is not only against the man that he harmed, but also against the Lord.

When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite

with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.” David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan said to David, “Now the LORD has put away your sin; you shall not die.

Psalm 51:1-12

Joining with David in his plea for forgiveness, we respond to his story by singing Psalm 51:1-12. The traditional heading to this psalm, which is also appointed for Ash Wednesday, assigns it originally to David. For Christians, the water imagery recalls baptism, and the “new and right spirit” is the Holy Spirit we receive.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

Wash me through and through from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

And so you are justified when you speak and upright in your judgement.

Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, a sinner from my mother’s womb.

For behold, you look for truth deep within me, and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.

Make me hear of joy and gladness, that the body you have broken may rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence and take not your holy Spirit from me.

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:1-16

This reading, like others from Ephesians, is laden with phrases important for Christian catechesis. The author writes of Christ descending, an apt metaphor on the day we think of manna. Eating sustains the body, and our eating of regular food and “the bread of angels” nourishes the body of Christ.

Therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it is said, “When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.” (When it says, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.

Gospel: John 6:24-35

John’s discourse does not suggest that the historicity of the manna story is the main point. Rather, it is Christ we are believing in, in whom we place our life’s trust. Both the manna and the barley bread of the feeding story become metaphors for Christ and the life he gives.

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the

bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Prayer over the Gifts

God our sustainer,
accept all we offer you this day,
and feed us continually with that bread
which satisfies all hunger,
your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Prayer After Communion

God of Grace,
we have shared in the mystery
of the body and blood of Christ.
May we who have tasted the bread of life
live with you for ever.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, August 8th, 2021

Readings: 2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; Psalm 130; Ephesians 4:25-5:2; John 6:35, 41-51

Collect

Unseen God,
drawing all people to the end of our desires:
teach us to know true bread from false
and to feed on him who shares our flesh,
Jesus Christ, our communion. Amen.
Prayers for an Inclusive Church (2009) alt.

First Reading: 2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33

This Sunday's reading edits down a chapter heavy with human miseries: a rebellious son, a coup d'état, military slaughter, a prince's brutal assassination, a heartbroken father. This sounds like the daily news. By tradition, Absalom was caught in the tree by his hair (2 Sam. 14:26). It is left to an Ethiopian slave to give David the tragic news. Those who choose to preach on these stories ought best to distinguish the value of hearing such ancient stories from the truth of our salvation through Jesus Christ. Christians have used this story to warn against children who disobey their parents. In the current time, the agony of the distraught father is also an affecting detail. So God, like a father, mourns when we rebel.

The king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders concerning Absalom. So the army went out into the field against Israel; and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. The men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the slaughter there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. The battle spread over the face of all the country; and the forest claimed more victims that day than the sword. Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. And ten young men, Joab's armour-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him, and killed him. Then the Cushite came; and the Cushite said, "Good tidings for my lord the king! For the Lord has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you." The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up to do you harm, be like that young man." The king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Psalm 130

In today's psalm, we join with all those who in the story are mourning—not only David, but the families of all the slaughtered warriors—to plead that God will hear us in our despair and redeem us. If today you have nothing to mourn, then pray this psalm for those who do. Psalm 130 is one of the treasures in the psalter that bears memorizing.

Out of the depths have I called you, O Lord;

Lord, hear my voice; let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.

If you, Lord, were to note what is done amiss, O Lord, who could stand?

For there is forgiveness with you; therefore you shall be feared.

I wait for you, O Lord; my soul waits for you; in your word is my hope.

My soul waits for you, O Lord, more than sentinels for the morning, more than sentinels for the morning.

O Israel, wait for the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy;

with whom there is plenteous redemption, and who shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:25-5:2

In talking about Christian living, the author of Ephesians does not mention, for example, the Ten Commandments, but rather urges an ethical life based on communal care. The passage is not about punishment for those who disobey, but about how to imitate Christ. This is the life that Christ gives in his flesh. The passage includes an early reference to God as triune.

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Gospel: John 6:35, 41-51

The traditional Christian iconography that depicts the evangelist John as the eagle flying highest aptly represents the author of today's passage. Life in Christ is so far beyond what we can see and know that language fails. Christ came down from heaven; believers will never hunger again; they will not die. We hear the good news of the new life of Christ hinted at in these extraordinary sentences.

Jesus said to the people, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Prayer over the Gifts

Abba
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.

St Mary the Virgin, Sunday, August 15th, 2021

Readings: Isaiah 7:10-15; Psalm 132:6-10, 13-14; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:1-7

Collect

Almighty God,
in choosing the virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son,
you made known your gracious regard
for the poor, the lowly, and the despised.
Grant us grace to receive your word in humility,
and so to be made one with your Son,
Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.
Evangelical Lutheran Worship (2006)

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-15

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good."

Psalm 132:6-10, 13-14

"The Ark! We heard it was in Ephratah; we found it in the fields of Jearim.

Let us go to the dwelling place of the Lord; let us fall upon our knees before the footstool of the Lord.

Arise, O Lord, into your resting-place, you and the ark of your strength.

Let your priests be clothed with righteousness; let your faithful people sing with joy.

For your servant David's sake, do not turn away the face of your anointed.

For you, O Lord, have chosen Zion, and have desired it for your habitation:

"This shall be my resting-place for ever; here will I dwell, for I delight in it.

Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7

When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Gospel: Luke 2:1-7

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.

Prayer over the Gifts

God of mercy,
receive all we offer you this day.
May we share with the Virgin Mary
the joys of your eternal kingdom,
and live with you in unending love.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer After Communion

God of grace,
today we raise our voices
to magnify your holy name,
and, in our own generation, to call her blessed
who became the mother of our Saviour Jesus Christ.
May we who have shared this holy food
continue, with her, in your glorious kingdom,
founded and established in Jesus Christ our Lord.
We ask this in his name.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 22nd, 2021

Readings: 1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43; Psalm 84; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 6:56-69

Collect

Gracious God,
although we once were strangers,
you receive us as friends
and draw us home to you.
Set your living bread before us,
so that we may be strengthened
to continue the work
your Son has commissioned us to do. Amen.
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: 1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43

This Sunday's excerpt is from the narrative of the dedication of Solomon's temple. The optional verses speak of the procession to the temple and the presence of God in the cloud. Solomon's temple, which was built by slave labor, was similar to other ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian temples, except that instead of housing a statue of the deity, it housed the ark of the covenant. Not God, but "the name of" God, resided therein. The prayer, written in the late sixth century as Solomon's prayer, includes both praise to God and sustained pleas that God would answer the prayers of those who would pray in the temple. In the omitted verses, a full intercessory prayer lists many of the sorrows and needs of humankind. Gladly, the lectionary includes the petition that God will hear also the prayer of the foreigner, who prays "toward," although not in, the temple. Although by the time of this writing the temple had been destroyed, Jews retained a deep reverence for its memory and held to a promise that in time God would rebuild the temple. This prayer has served as a model for Christians in their rites of dedication, and the beauty and comprehensiveness of the chapter might inspire our assemblies to far more well-crafted and sustained intercessions each Sunday.

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. He said, "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand. Therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.' Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant my father David. But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O Lord my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may

heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive. Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name - for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm - when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built."

Psalm 84

We respond to Solomon's prayer at the temple with our own singing of Psalm 84, which likens God's dwelling place to a swallow nesting with her young. So in our nest we are fed by the mother bird Christ. Christians see the reference to pools of water as imaging baptism. As if we are King Solomon on the Day of Dedication, we praise God for bestowing favor on us (v. 11).

How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

The sparrow has found her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts, my Sovereign and my God.

Happy are they who dwell in your house! They will always be praising you.

Happy are the people whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way!

Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.

They will climb from height to height, and you, the God of gods, will reveal yourself in Zion.

Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; hearken, O God of Jacob.

Behold our defender, O God; and look upon the face of your anointed.

For one day in your courts is better than a thousand in my own room, and to stand at the threshold of the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.

For you, Lord God, are both sun and shield; you will give grace and glory;

no good thing will you withhold, O Lord, from those who walk with integrity.

O Lord of hosts, happy are they who put their trust in you!

Second Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

The military imagery of the armor of God stresses protection and peace, not violent response. Even the “sword,” as the word of God, is the gospel of peace. Since the first century, Christians have debated the morality of their involvement in the military, which indicates that there is no easy answer to this question. In the complex descriptions typical of the author of Ephesians, we speak the “mystery” of the gospel with “boldness.” This passage concludes the lectionary’s semicontinuous reading of Ephesians. Preceding this passage is the household codes, which advocate ethics in terms of the patriarchal slave culture of the Roman Empire; in both past and present a Christian ethical quicksand, the household codes have been omitted from the lectionary’s selections.

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Gospel: John 6:56-69

In concluding a chapter that speaks repeatedly of eating Christ’s flesh, the fourth evangelist writes that the flesh is useless. Thus he has elaborated on a metaphor, yet then reminds the reader that it was only a metaphor. The metaphors are the vehicles that proclaim the “words of eternal life.” The gospel calls also us, along with the Twelve, to receive Christ, to live in him.

Jesus said, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, "Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who

were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father." Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

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.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 29th, 2021

Readings: Song of Solomon 2:8-13; Psalm 45:1-2, 7-10; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Collect

Blessed are you, O Lord and Lover,
source of beauty and depth of passion.
Strengthen and inspire us to do the word we hear
and live the faith we confess,
through Jesus, our Saviour and Friend. Amen.
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002)

First Reading: Song of Solomon 2:8-13

A reading from Song of Songs is placed here because of the tradition that the book was written by Solomon, the king said to have had a thousand wives and concubines. Scholars actually have no idea who wrote these love poems, nor when. The collection includes no reference to God, and its Hebrew is far more sexually explicit than our biblical translations render. The first lines in this Sunday's selection are spoken by the woman, who speaks most of the book; these are followed by those of her lover, who is described as a king and shepherd. The book presents a gracious antidote to the tragic tale in Genesis 3. Christians have interpreted these love poems as an allegorical dialogue either between Christ and the church or between God and the individual soul. Medieval artists used the imagery of the lovers in the garden to depict the meeting of Mary Magdalene with the risen Christ. The erotic poems may also suggest to Christian spouses the love of each other's bodies that God intends, with the lush imagery of springtime a welcome alternative to much of how our culture depicts sexual exchange.

The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Psalm 45:1-2, 7-10

Psalm 45 is a royal psalm describing the marriage of an Israelite king and a foreign princess. We respond to the poem of Song of Songs by singing Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9. Christians have interpreted the king as an image of Christ, whom believers metaphorically marry.

My heart is stirring with a noble song; let me recite what I have fashioned for the king; my tongue shall be the pen of a skilled writer.

You are the fairest of mortals; grace flows from your lips, because God has blessed you for ever

You love righteousness and hate iniquity. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions.

All your garments are fragrant with myrrh, aloes, and cassia, and the music of strings from ivory palaces makes you glad.

The daughters of rulers stand among the ladies of the court; at your side is the queen, adorned with the gold of Ophir.

“Hear, O daughter; consider and listen closely; forget your people and your father’s house

Second Reading: James 1:17-27

This Sunday begins five weeks of semicontinuous reading of James, which seems in direct debate with Paul as to the role of Jewish, or any, law within the Christian community. Mark has claimed that sin comes from within: James says it comes from the outside world, which Christians need to avoid. Churches have taught that both are true.

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures. You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act - they will be blessed in their doing. If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

This gospel reading exemplifies the dictum to avoid literalist interpretations: the point is not that Christians can eat with dirty hands and dishes. The passage leaves unanswered the question as to which parts of the Jewish ethical tradition remain valid for Christians. But the force of the reading is clear: it is the individual human heart that is to blame for sin, not outside sources or influences. The reading includes both what Lutherans call “law”—each of us is to blame—and what Lutherans call “gospel”—Jesus is eating with all of us disciples.

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition." Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

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.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 5th, 2021

Readings: Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23; Psalm 125; James 2:1-10, 14-17; Mark 7:24-37

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: Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23

From Lectionary 23 through 25 the semicontinuous option appoints passages from the book of Proverbs. Classified as Wisdom literature, Proverbs was traditionally understood as composed or compiled by King Solomon. Contemporary scholars date its aphorisms as reflecting court etiquette, social mores, and commonplace truisms from the tenth through the fourth century bce. The original audience was young males, which helps account for the androcentrism found throughout the collection and perhaps also for the simplicity of its worldview that people are either wise or foolish, bad or good. Today's verses, Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23, span the unit called "Wise Sayings of Solomon" and the unit called "Sayings of the Wise," and contain the central biblical understanding that the Lord is on the side of the poor. Christians have used such passages to preach a countercultural care for the dispossessed.

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favour is better than silver or gold. The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all. Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of anger will fail. Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor. Do not rob the poor because they are poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the Lord pleads their cause and despoils of life those who despoil them.

Psalm 125

We respond to the passage from Proverbs with Psalm 125, in which the people affirm their faith in God's protection for those who do good. Christians have taught that only because of Christ can persons be upright.

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but stands fast for ever.

The hills stand about Jerusalem; so does the Lord stand round about this people, from this time forth for evermore.

The sceptre of the wicked shall not hold sway over the land allotted to the just, so that the just shall not put their hands to evil.

Show your goodness, O Lord, to those who are good and to those who are true of heart.

As for those who turn aside to crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the evildoers; but peace be upon Israel.

Second Reading: James 2:1-10, 14-17

James, tell it like it is! We seem little better than James's community at treating rich and poor equally. For James, genuine faith will alter stereotypical societal values. The passage calls contemporary believers to enact their salvation by their care for the poor.

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Gospel: Mark 7:24-37

Most Christian worshipers are, like the Syrophenician woman, not Jewish, yet with her we can enter the house of the church, have our demons overcome by Christ, and eat the crumbs from the table. With the mother, we pray for everyone in need of healing. That Jesus speaks the word of God becomes the basis for the story of the deaf man now able to hear. Also our ears and hearts are opened by the presence of Christ in our midst during worship. Although it is often suggested that Jesus is merely testing the woman's faith, some contemporary exegetes interpret the gospel exchange between the woman and Jesus to mean that her need called even Jesus into a fuller understanding of God's grace.

Jesus set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go the demon has left your daughter." So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

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

God of the Harvest,
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.