

Sunday, May 21, 2017
Sixth Sunday of Easter

INTRODUCTION

Jesus does not leave his followers orphaned. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus comes to abide with his disciples of every generation. As Pentecost draws near, we are reminded that the risen Christ dwells in us as the Spirit of truth. We receive this Spirit in baptism and pray that in our gathering around the Lord's table the Spirit will transform us to be the body of the risen Christ in the world.

PRELUDE **"Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee"** Setting: Robert Hobby

***GATHERING SONG** **"I Sing the Mighty Power of God"**

**I sing the mighty pow'r of God,
that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad,
and built the lofty skies.
I sing the wisdom that ordained
the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full at His command,
and all the stars obey.**

**I sing the goodness of the Lord,
that filled the earth with food;
He formed the creatures with His Word,
and then pronounced them good.
Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed,
where'er I turn my eye:
if I survey the ground I tread,
or gaze upon the sky!**

**There's not a plant or flow'r below
but makes Thy glories known;
and clouds arise and tempests blow
by order from Thy throne;
while all that borrows life from Thee
is ever in Thy care,
and ev'rywhere that man can be,
Thou, God, art present there.**

***GREETING**

ℙ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

☩ And also with you.

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

☞ *Almighty and ever-living God,*

☞ you hold together all things in heaven and on earth. In your great mercy receive the prayers of all your children, and give to all the world the Spirit of your truth and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen!

ANTHEM

"Total Praise"

Chancel Choir

Richard Smallwood

FIRST READING

Acts 17:22-31

In Athens, Paul faces the challenge of proclaiming the gospel to Greeks who know nothing of either Jewish or Christian tradition. He proclaims that the "unknown god" whom they worship is the true Lord of heaven and earth who will judge the world with justice through Jesus, whom God has raised from the dead.

²²Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said,

'For we too are his offspring.'

²⁹Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Reflection

Last Sunday we met Paul as Saul, the young man who participated in the stoning of Stephen. In this text, we meet him as the missionary to the Gentiles, preaching to the crowd in Athens. The Greeks did not want to offend any God, so they had an altar "to the unknown God." How does Paul speak to them? (verses 22-23) I think often when we think about talking about our faith in Jesus, we think we have to convince people that they are wrong and we are right. (Not surprisingly, that approach doesn't work very well.) How does Paul make connections with those he's speaking to? How does he identify God to them? (verses 23-28) If you heard Paul speak, what would you know about this God he is talking about? What does Paul urge his listeners to do? (verses 30-31) Does this work for Paul? (see verses 32-34) We are often urged not to talk about religion or politics. What in Paul's approach

might be helpful when we want to share our faith? What does this text teach us about sharing our faith in a culture of diversity?

PSALM 66:8-20

⁸Bless our | God, you peoples;

let the sound of | praise be heard.

⁹**Our God has kept us a- | mong the living
and has not allowed our | feet to slip.**

¹⁰For you, O God, have | tested us;
you have tried us just as sil- | ver is tried.

¹¹**You brought us in- | to the net;
you laid heavy burdens up- | on our backs.**

¹²You let people ride over our heads; we went through | fire and water,
but you brought us out into a place | of refreshment.

¹³**I will enter your house | with burnt offerings
and will pay | you my vows—**

¹⁴those that I promised | with my lips
and spoke with my mouth when I | was in trouble.

¹⁵**I will offer you burnt offerings of fatlings with
the | smoke of rams;
I will give you ox- | en and goats.**

¹⁶Come and listen, all you | who believe,
and I will tell you what God has | done for me.

¹⁷**I called out to God | with my mouth,
and praised the Lord | with my tongue.**

¹⁸If I had cherished evil | in my heart,
the Lord would | not have heard me;

¹⁹**but in truth | God has heard me
and has attended to the sound | of my prayer.**

²⁰Blessed be God, who has not reject- | ed my prayer,
nor withheld unfailing | love from me.

Reflection

How do we bless God? (verse 8) Why should we give God praise? (verse 9) What is the psalmist's assumption about bad or difficult things that happen to us as God's people? (verses 10-12) How has God blessed the people? (verse 12) How does the psalmist bless God? (verses 13-15) This does not describe how we worship. What do we do to bless God? How does the psalmist celebrate the relationship the community has with God? (verses 16-17) How has God affirmed and blessed that relationship? (verses 18-20)

SECOND READING

1 Peter 3:13-22

Christians have a zeal for doing what is right in God's eyes no matter what the circumstances because in baptism we are saved and made alive. Thus our Christian beliefs and behavior are to be a matter of public record just as our baptism is.

¹³Who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. ¹⁸For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Reflection

The author of 1 Peter encourages Christians to keep faith even when they are suffering. What do you think of the exhortation that if we are eager to do what is good no one will harm us? (verse 13) What do you think is the blessing in suffering for doing what is right? (verse 19) I can imagine that it is a blessing not to be intimidated by those who want you to be afraid. How does "sanctify[ing] Christ as Lord" help us to not be afraid? The letter of 1 Peter is written by one who is not afraid, and who is full of hope, perhaps in spite of all that is going on. Do you have hope? Why is hope important? How do you account for the hope in your heart and mind? As I read this, I am struck by the exhortation to gentleness and reverence when we defend our hope. That surely can only be done by someone who is not full of fear! Why is it important to have a clear conscience? (verses 16-17) Again, I think that we can only have a clear conscience if we are not afraid of the wrong people and the wrong things. What do you think? Who is the author's model for such hope and faith? (verse 18) What is the author's understanding of the work of Christ for those who did not die in faith? (verses 19-20—you may recognize this from the Apostles' Creed, when we confess our faith in Jesus, "who descended to the dead" (or to hell, as we used to say). What has Jesus accomplished for them, and for us? (verses 21-23) In this text, the author sees in the story of Noah and the flood a reference to baptism. How has the flood of baptism saved you?

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

ELW 172

**Halle, halle, hallelujah.
Halle, halle, hallelujah.
Halle, halle, hallelujah.
Hallelujah. Hallelujah.**

***GOSPEL**

John 14:15-21

In final words to his disciples on the night of his arrest, Jesus encourages obedience to his commandments and speaks of the Spirit, who will be with them forever.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁵"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

¹⁸"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no

longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

Reflection

*This text begins, “If you love me...” Has anyone ever said that to you? Or perhaps you have said that to someone. What usually comes after “If you love me...”? Perhaps your child, or a boyfriend or girlfriend said that to you, or even a parent or spouse. Here Jesus is saying it to you. What does he want us to do “if you love me”? What are Jesus’ commandments? (If you can’t remember, see John 13:34-35) If we love Jesus, we will keep his commandments. What will he do for us to help us to do that? (verses 15-17) “Advocate” is the translation of the Greek word *paraclete* (this name for the Spirit is only used in John’s gospel), which means “one who is called alongside.” Other translations of this word might be “helper,” “comforter,” “encourager,” “intercessor.” (From notes in the Lutheran Bible.) How will this Advocate help us? (verse 17) Even though Jesus is leaving his disciples, what is his promise to them? (verse 18) How will we experience the presence of Jesus with us? (verse 19) Once again, Jesus refers to his unity with God the Father, and with us as his believers. (verse 20) How will we know that we love Jesus, and he and the Father love us? (verse 21) Again, this is not a teaching to be diagrammed, but perhaps to be danced. How do you understand this unity of believers with Jesus and with his Father? If you don’t understand it (!), how do you experience it in your life of faith?*

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Kris Langdon

DISCOVERY TALK

Carolyn Pearl

SERMON

“Seeking After God”

Rev. Roger Lenander

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Lord Reign In Me”

**Over all the earth, You reign on high,
ev’ry mountain stream, ev’ry sunset sky.
But my one request, Lord, my only aim
Is that You'd reign in me again.**

Refrain

**Lord, reign in me, reign in Your pow'r;
Over all my dreams, in my darkest hour.
You are the Lord of all I am,
So won't You reign in me again.**

**Over ev’ry thought, over ev’ry word,
may my life reflect the beauty of my Lord;
'cause You mean more to me
than any earthly thing.
So won't You reign in me again.**

**Lord, reign in me, reign in Your pow'r;
Over all my dreams, in my darkest hour.**

**You are the Lord of all I am,
so won't You reign in me again,
so won't You reign in me again,
so won't You reign in me again. (repeat last refrain)**

***APOSTLES' CREED**

**☩ I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen!**

***PRAYER SONG**

"The Spirit Intercedes for Us"

ELW 180

**The Spirit intercedes for us
with sighs too deep
for words to express.
Oh, oh.**

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Rejoicing in the risen life of Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church. Draw your whole church together as one. Bring an end to division. Send your Spirit into your people and rouse us to greater love and mission. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For the earth. For scientists, photographers, and explorers. For scholars, poets, musicians, artists, and all who lead us to greater knowledge and appreciation of beauty. For lakes and rivers, watersheds and wetlands, ponds and oceans. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For the nations. Give wisdom to those who govern. Strengthen all who work for peace. Protect those who have been displaced or have left their homes in search of safety and freedom. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For those in need. For those who suffer abuse or neglect. For those who suffer post-traumatic stress. For those who struggle with addiction. For those who grieve and all who are ill *especially Ron, Doris, Willard, Cody, Terry, Chester, Peggy Ann, Owen, Gerald, Dave, Trisha, Samantha, Bob, Sheylin, Terry, Stephanie, Dorothy, Linda, Scott, Alva*. We also pray for those we name before you aloud or silently in our hearts (*pause for 10 seconds*). Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For this assembly. Bless those preparing for baptism and affirmation of baptism. Strengthen our ministries of evangelism, outreach, and pastoral care. Deepen our faith and knowledge of you. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For all the men and women of our armed forces, at home and abroad. We especially lift up to you, Jason Shields. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

With thanksgiving, we remember those who have died. Inspire us by their witness to your love. Bring us into your eternal presence to live with you forever. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Joining our voices with your faithful ones in every time and place, we offer our prayers in the name of the Risen One, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen!

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

- ☐ The peace of Christ be with you always.
- ☑ **And also with you!**

OFFERTORY

"For the Beauty of the Earth"

ELW 879

vv. 1, 4, 5

**For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies:**

Refrain

**Christ, our God, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.**

**For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,**

friends on earth and friends above;
for all gentle thoughts and mild: *Refrain*

For each perfect gift of thine,
peace on earth and joy in heav'n;
for thyself, best gift divine,
to our world so freely giv'n: *Refrain*

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE** *"All Creatures of Our God and King"*

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below,
Alleluia, Alleluia!
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia, Alleluia!
Alleluia, Alleluia!
Alleluia!

***OFFERING PRAYER**

P *Be known to us, O Lord,*
C **in the breaking of the bread, as you were made known to the disciples. Receive these gifts, and the offering of our lives, that we may be your risen body in the world. Amen!**

***DIALOGUE**

P *The Lord be with you.*
C **And also with you.**
P *Lift up your hearts.*
C **We lift them to the Lord.**
P *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*
C **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

***PREFACE**

P *It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, for the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, the true Paschal Lamb who gave himself to take away our sin; who in dying has destroyed death, and in rising has brought us to eternal life. And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with earth and sea and all their creatures, and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:*

***HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

**Holy, holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy is our God,
God, the Lord of earth and heaven.**

ELW 762

**Holy, holy is our God.
Holy, holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy is our God,
God, the Lord of all of hist'ry.
Holy, holy is our God.**

***THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

P *In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.*

*Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.*

***LORD'S PRAYER**

G **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen!**

***INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P *Come to the banquet, for all is now ready. Hallelujah!*

***BLESSING**

P *The body and blood of our lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and
keep you in his grace.*

G **Amen!**

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P *Life-giving God,*

G **in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection you send light to
conquer darkness, water to give new life, and the bread of heaven to**

nourish your people. Send us forth as witnesses to Jesus' resurrection that we may show your glory to all the world; through the same Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Amen!

***BENEDICTION**

P *May God who has brought us from death to life fill you with great joy.
Almighty God, Father, \mp Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.*

G Amen!

***SENDING SONG**

"The Trees of the Field"

**You shall go out with joy
and be led forth with peace,
and the mountains and the hills
will break forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy
and all the trees of the field
will clap, will clap their hands.**

**And all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.
The trees of the field
will clap their hands.
The trees of the field
will clap their hands,
while you go out with joy. *(repeat from beginning)***

***DISMISSAL**

P *Alleluia! Christ is risen.*

G Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

P *You are the body of Christ raised up for the world.
Go in peace. Share the good news.*

G Thanks be to God!