

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

IN CHRIST THERE IS NO EAST OR WEST

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It wasn't much of an issue in the 1680s
 when Israel Erb stepped off the ship Rotterdam in Philadelphia
 with little belongings in his satchel.
The 30 Years War and its famine had taken care of most of his belongings.
A couple of years ago, I had started to do some ancestry stuff,
 and contacted a 'cousin' in the French city of Strassbourg.
French or German, Catholic or Protestant,
 Alsace-Lorraine was either depending on who sneezed that year.
So when the French Catholics won out,
 the persecuted German Protestants fled
 many came to America, not that there was a country in 1680.
I should add that other Erbs, following the Revolutionary War,
 as Tories, fled again - this time to Canada.
You see, immigrant blood runs through my veins.
And I'd be willing to bet that most of us sitting here
 have at most minimal Native American blood.
We're all of immigrant parents,
 and most of us as illegals -
 running from the English during the Irish Potato Famine,
 or as Puritans escaping the Restoration of the Monarchy,
 some people were sent to the penal colony of Georgia,
 others snuck in under misspelled names at Ellis Island;
 Jews Christianizing their names, for example,
 eastern Europeans with too many consonants -
 "shibboleths" instead of "sibboleths," in Biblical terms.

I've been intrigued, and have not taken time to research the theory -
 about Honesdale and her involvement in Abolition
 and the Underground Railroad.

It is thought that one of the routes from the south
 to New York and Canada passed through Hawley and Honesdale.
I became curious about this since our move into the Rectory last year
 and exploring the dungeon we call the basement.
Now, the Rectory was built just about the time of the Abolition of Slavery,
 so it's probably too late for the Railroad, but...

In the far front corner of the Rectory cellar,
going through numerous dirt-floored rooms,
one comes across the farthest room,
under, I believe, the front porch.
What is intriguing about this room is its entrance -
a beautiful stone archway, distinguished from any other room
in the serpentine maze of rooms.

Why?

An original entrance?

Left-over from the foundation of a former building?

I would like to think that Grace Church might actually have been
a sanctuary for those escaping persecution and enslavement.

Remember, part of my own family fled to Canada during the Revolution.

Maybe it is a personal agenda with which I struggle.

One of the problems being laid up like this for several months
is that I have a lot of time to read,
though most of my books are in that 3rd floor attic library.

A book I've been reading is *The Best of Dick Shepherd*,
long-time rector of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields in London,
and then a Canon at St. Paul's Cathedral.

In 1936 he wrote a short article entitled, "We Must Not Forget."

He writes, now remember this is 1936, still in the Depression,
that reeked havoc around the globe:

It seems that even our public bodies and corporations (not excluding churches), have
a way of forgetting those whom they were called into being to remember – and save.

He goes on to quote Beverly Nichols, who he says,

...recently suggested that 'every discussion of poverty should *begin* with the realization
of empty stomachs and squalid rooms... and that all parliamentary debates on
unemployment relief should be carried on in the sombre and fetid atmosphere of a
Glasgow slum.'

op cit, pg. 134

A week ago, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church
passed this legislation, which binds upon each of us here,

1) *Resolved*, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, in obedience to the many biblical injunctions imploring us not to wrong or oppress the alien in our midst and Jesus' own mandate to extend care for the stranger, and in accordance with our Baptismal Covenant, reaffirms resolution 2015-D057 supporting the New Sanctuary Movement; and be it further

2) *Resolved*, That The Episcopal Church urge its members, as people of faith and people of conscience, pledge to challenge and question any unjust immigration law, policy, or practice that is inconsistent with our biblical mandate to "not wrong or oppress a resident alien" (Exodus 22:21); and be it further

3) *Resolved*, That The Episcopal Church recommend that its institutions and congregations become places of welcome, refuge, healing, and other forms of material and pastoral support for those targeted for deportation due to immigration status or some perceived status of difference, and that we work alongside our friends, families, and neighbors to ensure the dignity and human rights of all people;

Last week, the Rev'd Dr. Amy Richter recalled to us

Jesus's miracle of feeding of the 5,000,
following on the heels of King Herod's horrific birthday bash,
at which St. John the Baptist is e-headed.

The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 lies between

the verses of given us for today's Gospel reading.

Dr. Richter writes:

"What happens next in Mark's gospel, is that Jesus throws a dinner party. There's no guarded palace just a beautiful open field where all are welcome. There's no head table; everyone is a guest of honor. There's no boasting, just thanksgiving. There's no pompous vow-making just simple food, blessed, broken, and shared, and enough for all. No horrible silver platter of death, just twelve baskets full to the brimming with abundant life-giving bread and fish."

[the omitted verses as a reference]:

When it was getting late, his disciples came to him and said, "It is already very late, and this is a lonely place. Send the people away, and let them go to the nearby farms and villages in order to buy themselves something to eat." "You yourselves give them something to eat," Jesus answered. They asked, "Do you want us to go and spend two hundred silver coins on bread in order to feed them?" So Jesus asked them, "How much bread do you have? Go and see." When they found out, they told him, "Five loaves and also two fish."

Jesus then told his disciples to make all the people divide into groups and sit down on the green grass. So the people sat down in rows, in groups of a hundred and groups of fifty. Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks to God. He broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. Everyone ate and had enough.

Mark 6:35-42

In his address to the Church this week, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry,

reminds us that:

“Jesus of Nazareth inspired a movement. A community of people whose lives were centered on Jesus Christ and committed to living the way of God's unconditional, unselfish, sacrificial, and redemptive love...

Today I believe our vocation is to live as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement... to grow more deeply with Jesus Christ at the center of our lives, so we can bear witness to his way of love in and for the world.”

St. Paul comforts us Gentiles in today's Epistle

that we are all one in Christ Jesus -

Jesus, through the Cross being the foundation-stone
of our Tower of Babel,
made now into the Temple of God's holiness,
where the hymn reminds us that

In Christ there is no East or West,
in him no South or North,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.

One has to wonder what poet John Oxenham had in mind in 1908

when he wrote those famous words in the West End,

London's mid-town Manhattan of sorts,

complete with Piccadilly Circus,

London's Times Square.

Did he, looking out on Piccadilly,

see the myriad of all walks of life from around the globe

which we see walking around us today at Times Square?

What sort of humanity did he reflect on?

One wonders.

In Christ.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Lego/Duplo tower

I understand you all had quite the fun last week at Godly Play.
I asked Mrs. Erb to keep it for me as it helps me today.

You were asked to build this huge tower - together!
and not being able to talk to one another.

That must have been a challenge -
How did you communicate?
How did you help each other?
Did the tower fall apart sometimes?

I see all sorts of shapes and sizes and colors and even old and new pieces.

And you know that with a tower this big,
you need a strong foundation, or it will topple over.

The Church is like that.
We have many different people who join together in love of God.
And we have a strong foundation - that's Jesus, of course,
and the love Jesus gives to each and every person.
He teaches us to have that same love for people.
But sometimes we know that's not easy.

So, let's pray:

Dear Jesus, you came to show us love, and how to love. But sometimes it's not easy. We need you in our hearts each and every day to fill us with love that we can share as a sign of your love for us. AMEN.