

The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

5-6 September 2020

**The SERVICE of EVENING and MORNING PRAYER
with HOLY COMMUNION**

ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRAYER CONCERNS & THANKSGIVINGS

OPENING SENTENCE

Stand *Officiant* Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Philippians 1:2

Let us pray:

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION of SIN

Jesus said, "The first commandment is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."

Mark 12:29-31

Most merciful God,

All: **we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

The priest offers Absolution.

Officiant: Glory to God in the highest,
All: **and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father;
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Officiant God be with you.*All* **And also with you.**

Let us pray.

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 33:7-11

So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life. Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

Here ends the Reading.

Sit PSALTER **Psalm 149** *read responsively, observing the verse*

- 1 Hallelujah! Sing to the Lord a new song; *
sing his praise in the congregation of the faithful.
- 2 **Let Israel rejoice in his Maker; ***
let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
- 3 Let them praise his Name in the dance; *
let them sing praise to him with timbrel and harp.
- 4 **For the Lord takes pleasure in his people ***
and adorns the poor with victory.
- 5 Let the faithful rejoice in triumph; *
let them be joyful on their beds.
- 6 **Let the praises of God be in their throat ***
and a two-edged sword in their hand;
- 7 To wreak vengeance on the nations *
and punishment on the peoples;
- 8 **To bind their kings in chains ***
and their nobles with links of iron;
- 9 To inflict on them the judgment decreed; *
this is glory for all his faithful people. Hallelujah!

EPISTLE READING

Romans 13: 8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Here ends the Reading.

Sit GOSPEL READING

Matthew 18:15-20

Jesus said, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and

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

Here ends the Reading.

MEDITATION

Stand The NICENE CREED

Officiant: We believe in one God,

All: **the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.**

Through him all things were made.

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit**

he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.**

**With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

The PRAYERS

Officiant God be with you.
People **And also with you.**
Officiant Let us pray.

Officiant and People

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS & THANKSGIVINGS - Form III BCP p. 387

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;
That we all may be one.

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;
That your Name may be glorified by all people.

We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons;
That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;
That there may be justice and peace on the earth.

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;
That our works may find favor in your sight.

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;
That they may be delivered from their distress.

Give to the departed eternal rest;
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;
May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

silence is held

Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear what we ask in the Name of your Son: Accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING & DISMISSAL

The peace of God which surpasses human understanding keep your hearts and your mind in the knowledge and love of the Lord and his Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. And the blessing of God Almighty, † Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Let us go forth in peace rejoicing in the power of the Spirit. Alleluia, alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!

Exodus 12: 1-14
Psalm 149
Romans 13: 8-14
Matthew 18: 15-20

HOLY POKER

+ + +

I've confessed to watching GRIT-TV, the station with old westerns,
like Laramie, The Virginian, and Tales of Wells Fargo.
(You younger folk, don't worry about not knowing about them.)
So I've been watching horse-riding, gun-shooting, and well, poker playing.
Not that I've learned how to play, but my grandson could tell me.
I do know that when you are in control of your hand,
instead of your hand being in control,
you are tempted to raise the ante
so that the stakes are even higher for your potential take.

Jesus didn't know about poker - it hadn't been devised yet as a game.
Though the ancient Romans, and even the Jewish, had their games.
But the observant Jew would not play games of chance.
Remember that the Roman soldiers at Jesus' Crucifixion rolled dice
to win Jesus' cloak.

Today, though, Jesus offers a philosophy which could have parallels to poker
and raising the ante, or in the Gospel, *not* raising the ante.
There is a familiar piece of advice in organizational systems:
“Don't raise the situation further up the scale than is necessary.”
In other words, keep the conflict at an even level,
before going to a higher level of authority,
and thus acerbating the situation,
or as we hear today, throwing gas on the fire.
Not that I've ever done that, though I used to have hair!

Hear again Jesus' words for dealing with conflict:
Jesus said, "If a member of the church sins against you, go and
point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member
listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not
listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every
word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three
witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the
church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church,
let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

In other words, Jesus tells us to start at the grass-roots,
and if necessary - and *only* if necessary, take to the next level,
but no further.
What motivates Jesus' teaching is that there is a trouble-maker in the Church -
the Church - there is not yet a Church, though.

The Rev'd Canon Kathleen Walker of the Diocese of North Carolina writes:

Matthew's Gospel challenges us to become involved in tough conversations. We are called to bravely stand up for what is right and against what is wrong and to raise our voices. If needed, the roadmap provides strategies wherever conflicts develop. This particular passage is thought to be a conversation that was created by the apostle. It is highly unlikely that Jesus said these exact words because Jesus never spoke about the church or resolving conflicts in the church. This text applies to conflicts that required attention after his death. The message, however, is central to an understanding of how to stay in conversation at the most challenging times.

Sermons that Work, 2020

There was not yet a Church, but as our small Bible Study group has learned,

Matthew's Jesus is concerned with the nascent gathering
preparing for community in the kingdom of heaven,
which is right at hand - right here and ready for us.

Now if a brother or sister sins against you,

and instead of defaming her name before others
go privately, one on one, and discuss the matter with her.

Open and honest, without involving others.

Earlier in Matthew's Gospel, our Bible Study group read this week that

Jesus says something very similar to those in Church:
(and it is one of the suggested Offertory sentences in the BCP):

“If, in bringing your gift to the Altar, you remember that your brother or sister has anything against you, drop your offering and go to that one and make amends, that you may both come with rejoicing before the Altar of God.” *Matthew 5: 23,24*

And what is most intriguing, if we read the Gospel in full context is that,
when I approach my sister with compassion and the two of us are alone,
we're not alone - because Christ is with us -
giving us the holy trinity, of sorts.

Don't give up on one try.

One hand at Bridge isn't enough to win the match.

You may not really convince her that you love her.

Go back with one or two friends -

those who have already joined you in the Name of Christ
through prayer and contemplation
to win back in love that one who would be lost
or who you kicked out of the gate in the first place.

Christ will be there, too!

Remember that you should owe no one anything except the love
which fulfills all requirements of the Law.

Love - that Christian Ace card which packs such a wallop!

What does Jesus suggest next?

“If the offender refuses to listen even to the three of you,
let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

Well, you know what Jesus did with those Gentiles and tax collectors!

That’s right.

He sat down and invited them to dinner

a rich feast that would last throughout the evening.

Then he would call them to be his greatest disciples!

Not even here do we get the curse that we expect in a quick reading
of today’s Gospel story.

Here is a true understanding of Jesus’ command,

reminded to us by St. Paul,

to truly live into the divine, transforming love,
which saves not one soul in the process,
but multiplies like those magical experiences
of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit
magnifying our efforts at reconciliation.

Treat them as Gentiles and Tax Collectors, just as Jesus did.

Invite them to lunch or dinner

and then spend the evening playing games and laughing together,
forgetting all that has passed.

“What was it we were fighting about?”

“Heck, you know, I don’t remember!”

“Me neither!”

“If, in bringing your gift to the Altar, you remember that your
brother or sister has anything against you, drop your offering
and go to that one and make amends, that you may both come
with rejoicing before the Altar of God.”

Remember those famous lines from St. Paul’s chapter:

“Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or boastful or proud...”

Or just as familiar, perhaps, the Prayer of St. Francis:

Let us pray:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred,
let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is
discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is
despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is
sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled
as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as
to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that
we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal
life.

BCP, p.833

Amen and AMEN.