The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost



August 23, 2020 10:30AM

We Gather

Instructions for standing, sitting, and kneeling are rubrics from the Book of Common Prayer. Any person who is unable to stand or kneel is welcome to sit for any part of the service regardless of the printed instruction. Please feel comfortable using any posture you wish.

Processional Hymn: #189

Great is Thy faithfulness

Soloist: Carol Lashley-Bobb



Introduction:

Celebrant: Welcome to virtual Grace in beautiful, downtown Muskogee Oklahoma!

This church has served the downtown community for almost 130 years. We are looking forward to the next century. Please join us today online as we wrestle with that famous challenge from Jesus, "Who do you say that I am?"

Opening Acclamation / Call to Worship

Celebrant: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

People: And blessed be His kingdom, now and for ever. Amen

Collect for Purity

Celebrant: 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*

Song of Praise: #S-236

Glory to You



Collect of the day

Celebrant: Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever **Amen**

We Hear God's Word

First Lesson: Isaiah 51:1-6

Reader: A reading from the book of Isaiah.

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.

For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples. I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope.

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be for ever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

- *Reader:* Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
- People: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 138

- *Reader:* I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with my whole heart; *
- People: before the gods I will sing your praise.
- *Reader:* I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your Name, *
- People: because of your love and faithfulness;
- Reader: For you have glorified your Name *
- People: and your word above all things.
- *Reader:* When I called, you answered me; *
- People: you increased my strength within me.
- *Reader:* All the kings of the earth will praise you, O LORD, *
- People: when they have heard the words of your mouth.
- Reader: They will sing of the ways of the LORD, *
- People: that great is the glory of the LORD.
- *Reader:* Though the LORD be high, he cares for the lowly; *
- People: he perceives the haughty from afar.
- *Reader:* Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; *
- *People:* you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me.
- *Reader:* The LORD will make good his purpose for me; *
- *People:* O LORD, your love endures for ever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

Second Lesson: Romans 12:1-8

Reader: A reading from the book of Romans.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People: Thanks be to God.

Gradual Hymn:#671

Amazing Grace (Vs.1-4) Words: John Newton; Music: Edwin Othello

Soloist: Carol Lashley-Bobb



Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

- *Reader:* The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew.
- People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.

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

Reader: Alleluia! Alleluia! Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people and kindle in them the fire of your love.

People: Thanks be to God! Alleluia, Alleluia.

Sermon

The Rev. Bob Wickizer

What is your story?

How many times have you read or heard the same passage of scripture and never noticed an important detail? Maybe this enforced isolation has raised my hermeneutical suspicions, but in today's gospel where Jesus prods the disciples to disclose his identity and where the very foundations of the Christian church are laid, the detail I have missed a hundred times is the location.

We read the nice phrase "in the district of Caesarea Philippi" and think nothing of it, but we should ponder this peculiar setting in depth. Jesus has traveled with his disciples for several years. He sent them out two by two. He sent them out with the seventy. Now, they are nearing the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and the Pentecost event at which the disciples will be given the Holy Spirit to lead their ministries which nearly all end in torture and death. You need to think of this moment in this place as a graduation ceremony, but in a very odd location.

If I had to pick a modern-day equivalent, it might be the Tenderloin District of San Francisco. Let me paint the picture. When Jesus came to the Tenderloin District, he asked his disciples "who do you say that I am?" Looking around, they were surrounded by drug dealers packing heat, tattoos covered their bodies, bodyguards, pimps and prostitutes swarmed like insects circling a free meal. You could hear Spanish, Cambodian, Vietnamese and a bit of English. Gunshots rang out nearby. Tires squealed. A Maserati whirled around the corner coming to an abrupt stop near Jesus.

The disciples were terrified. Street gangs owned this whole area where the police could not enter. In the Tenderloin, if somebody needed to be dead, it would happen. If they needed to be drug addicted, there was no choice. Things happened for reasons known only to the guys who drove sports cars made in Italy. The dude in a white coat stepped out of his red car. Engine still running, he flicked his cigarette at Jesus as a sinister gesture.

This is the kind of place Jesus took his disciples to have this conversation. They were undoubtedly shocked. Caesarea Philippi was named for the Roman emperor, Herod Philip. Before that, it was a Greek city dedicated to the god Pan, the half-human, half-goat god of shepherds. But that is where the nice part ends. The earlier Greek city, Panias, was built at the site of a spring flowing out of a cliff on the southeast side of Mount Hermon, way up in the northern end of Galilee.

In the rain shadow of Mount Hermon, the whole area received abundant rains and farming flourished. The Greeks believed that their fertility gods retreated every winter into the cave from which the spring emerged. The spring festivals of the return of the gods to their farms were occasions for orgies and wild behavior comparable to the Tenderloin. Later Canaanites worshipped their god, Baal, at the same site. The fertility gods all lived underground in the cave during the winter. The spring flowing out of the cliff literally represented the gates of the underworld or the gates of hell. The behavior of the city residents for two thousand years would make the meanest dudes in the Tenderloin District blush. Proper Jews in Jesus' day would never go there.

In this unlikely, worldly, dangerous, pagan place; in this den of iniquity; at a site the locals considered to be the gates of hell for over a thousand years, Jesus plants his church. Why there?

Where would the redeeming work of Jesus be the most visible, the most apparent? Where would wholeness and salvation make the most difference in people's lives? Where would it be more obvious that the love of God came down from heaven and brought a person into their right mind where they no longer chose a life of sin and estrangement? Where would the power of the living God proclaimed by Jesus and Peter be more different in contrast to all the gods of the world at that time?

The redeeming work of Christ, the messiah, the son of the living God, needs to be lived out, proclaimed and contrasted in and among all the gods of the world that we worship today. Inside a nice, safe, comfortable church building is NOT where this needs to happen.

We might ask then, what are the most harmful gods today that need to be confronted, and where do we find them? The list of who and what is as old as the bible. Greed, narcissism, selfishness, hatred, envy, sloth, gluttony, avarice, malice, anger, slander, licentiousness. Do I need to continue? It's the same list. People haven't changed. But where might we find them today?

City hall, state capital, national capitals, financial centers, entertainment centers. This, by the way, is also the short list of targets for the Taliban. They hate the west for precisely the same reasons Jesus graduated his disciples where he did. Because most of the west worships other gods. The next question naturally arises, what are we to do about it?

I do not believe in coercive evangelism where you beat people over the head with Jesus, how superior Jesus is, how superior you are because of him, and how if people don't get saved they will go to hell. I know it is popular, but I doubt if it is effective in the long run. I believe that each one of us is placed here for a reason. We are baptized and we proclaim the work of Jesus in our lives in quiet ways most of the time. When a big opportunity to proclaim Jesus arises, some of us take it, but we do not attempt to create the big opportunities.

We proclaim Jesus when we tell our story. I was once shown the doors of academia where I could follow in the footsteps of my family, teach and do research in the life of a university professor, but the games and the politics these very rational scientists played disgusted me and God called me somewhere else. Then I walked in the halls of venture capital where billions of dollars moved in and out. If I only paid homage to the god of ridiculous amounts of money, I would have more than I ever needed, but they nauseated me and I couldn't look in the mirror, so I left. Seeking refuge in the church, I became a priest to proclaim Christ's love to a broken world, but I encountered bishops and people who worshipped everything but the God of love. I was deeply hurt, beaten up, thrown out and slandered. After that, God took me to an unlikely place.

And God told me to go forth, proclaim the love of God to this particular circumstance, to this broken world. And I just keep working at it.

The questions Jesus posed back then come forward to you now. What is your story? Who do you proclaim as your lord? And what will you do about it today?

Just a closer walk with Thee Words: Anonymous; Music: American Folk Song



Nicene Creed

All in unison; Please stand as you are able.

- We believe in one God, 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. 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.

Prayers of the People

- *Reader:* As we have offered gratitude for God's grace upon this community, let us now offer our gifts to the Lord, trusting that by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be led to ever more faithful fellowship and service.
- *Reader:* For peace from things that separate us from one another and for our salvation.

People: Lord, have mercy.

- *Reader:* For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, especially...
- *People:* Christ church, Tulsa; Diocese of North Carolina; The Church of the Province of Uganda.
- *Reader:* For this holy gathering and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and fear of God.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Reader: For ...
- *People:* Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Ed and Poulson, our Bishops; Bob and Tom, our clergy; Tim & Jennifer, our wardens; vestry delegates, and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God. Lord, have mercy.
- *Reader:* For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people. We pray for our leaders, especially...
- People: Donald, our President; Mike, our Vice-president; Markwayne, our Congressman; James & Jim, our Senators; Kevin, our Governor; and Marlon, our Mayor. Lord, have mercy.
- Reader: For prisoners, the oppressed, all those in need or suffering, especially...
- People: Barbara & Family, Blackwell Family, Brad, Brewer Family, James & Shirley, Judy, Sherri, Bea, Eathen, Linda, John, Vicki, Angie, Blair, Brian, Glen, Dante, Marilyn, Jerry, Ann and all those affected by the pandemic, and those whose suffering is known only to God.
- *Reader:* We pray for those in the armed services. We pray for those who have died *(especially...)*
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- *Reader:* For ourselves, our families, and those we love. We pray for those in our parish, especially ...
- People: Chelsea, Dalton, Nora, Jackson.
- *Reader:* Also those who are traveling, *(especially...)*
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- *Reader:* Bless all those everywhere who give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy for love of him who laid down his life for us.
- People: Lord, hear our prayer.
- *Reader:* Remembering our most blessed Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.
- People: To you, O Lord.
- *Reader:* 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.
- People: Amen.

Confession and Absolution

Celebrant: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence may be kept.

Celebrant and People:

Most merciful God, 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.

Celebrant: Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

Peace

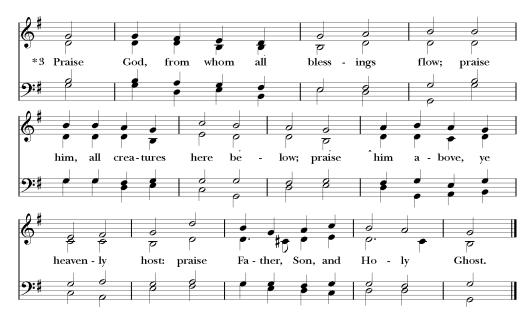
Please stand as you are able.

Celebrant:The peace of the Lord be always with you.People:And also with you.

Greet one another in the name of Christ.

Announcements; Anniversary and Birthday Blessings

Doxology:



The Great Thanksgiving

Sursum Corda

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Then, facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds:

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere, to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

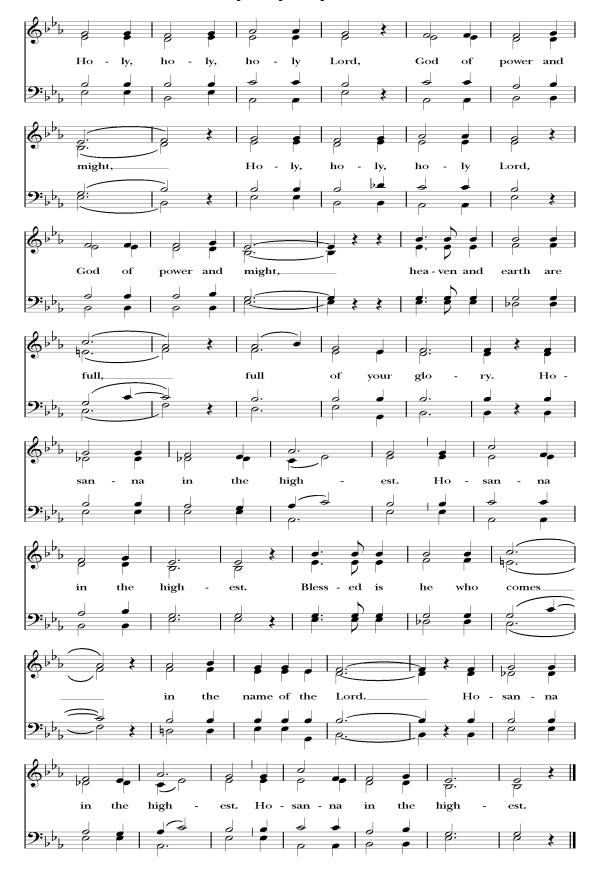
Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who on the first day of the week overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Sanctus

Holy, holy, holy Lord

Ken Yadon



The Celebrant Continues:

† Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." **† † †**

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." **† †**

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Celebrant and People: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

The Celebrant Continues:

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN**.

Lord's Prayer:

Celebrant: And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

Celebrant 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.

Fraction Anthem:

Jesus, Lamb of God

Ken Yadon



Breaking of the Bread

A period of silence is kept.

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

We Go Out To Do Our Work

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Celebrant: Let us pray.

Celebrant and People: Almighty God, giver of every good gift. All that we have and all that we are comes from you. Accept the humble gifts of who we are with our differences, our goodness, and our mistakes. Help us be the blessing to others that you are to us. Help us not to fear but to love fearlessly. Help us not to worry but to get busy and help. We ask you to remind us in our hearts and minds of the great needs of so many in the world today for love, truth, and clarity. Keep the clouds of darkness and confusion away as we work to make the world a better place. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit who guides, defends, and protects us. And who leads us into all truth. Amen

Pentecost Blessing

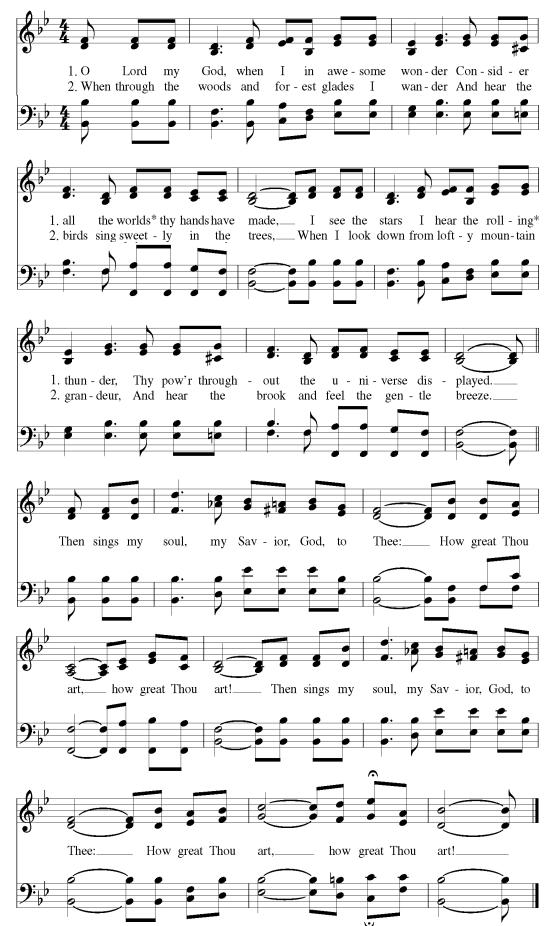
Celebrant: May the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, stream within us. May the breath of God renew us. May the breath of God invigorate us. May we walk with confidence into this new day. **Amen**

Sending

Celebrant: Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life. Allelujah, Allelujah. *People:* **Thanks be to God, Allelujah, Allelujah.** **Recessional Hymn: #60**

How great Thy art (Vs, 1,2)

Words/Music: Stuart K. Hine





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