

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost



September 20, 2020
10:30 AM

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: #494 *Crown him with many crowns (Vs. 1,2)* *Please stand as you are able.*

Introduction: *Please be seated.*

Celebrant: Good morning and welcome to Grace whether you are here with us in person or whether you are with us in the virtual world online. We are a diverse group. We like to have fun and we love to learn.

Paul's letter to the Philippians gives us a good image of those who believe in the power of Christ's love. We are to stand firm, together, side by side living our lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. I love the image of standing together. Matthew's gospel gives us the circumlocution for the "kingdom of God." Matthew calls it the kingdom of heaven and Jesus gives us the parable of the vineyard owner to explain what the kingdom of heaven is like. Please join us today as we take a look at heaven as a diverse, fun-loving, discerning gospel readers.

Opening Acclamation / Call to Worship *Please stand as you are able.*

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* *Please remain standing.*

Collect of the day *Please be seated.*

Celebrant: Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; 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: Jonah 3:10-4:11 *Please remain seated.*

Reader: A reading from the book of Jonah.

When God saw what the people of Nineveh did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

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

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 145:1-8

Reader: I will exalt you, O God my King, *

People: **and bless your Name for ever and ever.**

Reader: Every day will I bless you *

People: **and praise your Name for ever and ever.**

Reader: Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; *

People: **there is no end to his greatness.**

Reader: One generation shall praise your works to another *

People: **and shall declare your power.**

Reader: I will ponder the glorious splendor of your majesty *

People: **and all your marvelous works.**

Reader: They shall speak of the might of your wondrous acts, *

People: **and I will tell of your greatness.**

Reader: They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness; *

People: **they shall sing of your righteous deeds.**

Reader: The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, *

People: **slow to anger and of great kindness.**

Second Lesson: Philippians 1:21-30

Reader: A reading from the book of Philippians.

To me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

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

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Gradual Hymn:

Gentle Shepherd
Soloist: Lora Sellers

Please stand as you are able.

Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

Please remain standing.

Reader: The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People: **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

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

"You" is Plural

Please be seated.

Father O'Malley flew from Chicago to New York for a conference. The cab ended up in an accident and both Father O'Malley and the cab driver were killed. At the pearly gates, St. Peter welcomed the cab driver into his eternal habitation. Father O'Malley was sent down to the other place. Father O'Malley paused for a moment, looking back at St. Peter and asked, "Why am I going to hell?" St. Peter replied, "While you preached, they slept, but while he drove, they prayed."

Once while driving around St. Louis in my twenties, a twelve-year-old Jewish kid from New York who was riding in the back seat accused me of driving like a New York cabbie. Perhaps I should be comforted knowing where I am headed at the end of my days. This image of heaven, St. Peter, pearly gates, and spending eternity floating in the clouds and living in a mansion persists in the popular imagination. Unfortunately, our popular ideas about salvation, heaven and the afterlife are more grounded in Mediaeval fantasy than in the teachings of Jesus (or Moses or Muhammed for that matter).

One story that circulated in the Middle Ages involved the imaginary land of Cockaigne which was an endless feast with pigs that trotted already roasted to the dinner table. By the 18th century, the popular tract *Friendship in Death envisioned heaven as* "bright cascades and crystal rivulets rolling over orient pearls and sands of gold." No wonder people are motivated to go there.

And therein lies the problem. Heaven as a destination and as a place where individuals go after death to spend eternity, is easy to package and sell. Some preachers are said to be in the business of selling "fire insurance" by preventing you from burning in hell for eternity.

We have several challenges before us. First is the idea of eternity. Wherever heaven is, wherever God exists, wherever we go is outside the confines of our mortal existence in space

and time. There is no time in heaven. The word translated as eternal is better rendered as an “age” like the “Golden Age” or the “Civil War era.” It refers not so much to the passage of time as a period that is marked with a starting point. I could go on with the physics about this, but please get rid of the ideas connecting heaven with time and forever.

Next up is the idea of heaven as a destination or a place to go. For the same reasons we discussed about heaven being outside of our normal existence, there is no “there” to heaven. Whatever it is, it is not a place. You cannot find X,Y,Z coordinates for heaven.

All this brings us around to the idea of “you.” Paul’s letter to the Philippians today uses the word “you” or “your” 14 times. Our “come unto me” window in the back has Jesus saying, “Come unto me, all you who are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.” How many times do you read that and imagine that Jesus is talking to you, one person, in singular form? Go back to the King James Version and read it (this is one of the very few times where I find the KJV to be helpful). “Come unto me, all YE that labour and are heavy laden...” The word “ye” in Shakespearean English is you-plural as it is in the Greek bible and as are the 14 words for “you” in Paul’s letter.

What can we conclude from the fact that every time Jesus talks about salvation or heaven, individual people are not being saved, it is always YOU-plural? You are not saved on your own or by yourself. You do not go to heaven by yourself. WE are saved and WE all go together.

I find that much more comforting than all the scenes of judgment, confession, and agony. I figure that I may get to heaven by slipping in with the rest of the crowd. I’ll just stay in the back and hope she doesn’t notice I’m there.

In summary, heaven is not a destination nor a period of time nor does it have mansions for individuals to dwell in. Heaven, according to those who wrote the bible, is a process. It is going on right here and now. It has not yet started, and it will be forever. It is a journey, and we are on that journey together. You don’t have to wait until death to get to heaven.

Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who goes out to hire workers for her vineyard early in the morning. Too bad they didn’t have social media back then. Gary gets most of his grape pickers online. The point of all this complicated hiring and payment is that a few workers only had to work one hour for the same wage as those who worked all day in the hot sun. Such an arrangement offends our sense of fairness and that blinds us from what Jesus is trying to say.

Notice that no one is turned away from working in the vineyard. Notice that they all get paid. So, the kingdom of heaven is a vineyard where everybody gets to work and everybody gets paid. No one is left out. No one is turned away. Some people work harder or longer than others but that doesn’t matter. My final concern here is what kind of work it is that requires some people a lot longer than others.

Like Father O’Malley and the cab driver, I imagine St. Peter poses one question to each person. “Welcome to heaven” he says. “I have one question for you.” (pause) “Tell me, what is life all about.” Without hesitating, one person blurts out, “ME! It’s all about me.” The gates slam shut, and St. Peter says, “Sorry, you’re going to have to work a little longer until you figure it out.” The next person is asked the same question. A smile crosses her face. “Life, is all about us and what we can do to help each other.” The gates open and the six-year-old girl goes on in.

Silence for reflection after the sermon

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

Please kneel, sit or stand.

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: **St John's, Vinta; St. Thomas, Pawhuska; Diocese of Oregon; The Church of the West Indies.**

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, Gary, Ann, Connie, 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: **James, Shirley, Bret, Leah, Elizabeth.**

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

Please kneel, sit or stand.

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

Offertory

Offertory Sentence: Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God. *Ephesians 5:2*

Offertory Hymn:

Here I am Lord
Soloist: Lora Sellers

Please remain seated.

Doxology:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Please stand as you are able.

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.**

Sanctus: #S-130

Holy, holy, holy Lord

Please stand, sit, or kneel.

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: #S-164

Jesus, Lamb of God

Please remain seated.

Breaking of the Bread

A period of silence is kept.

Please come forward to receive communion while maintaining distances from one another. The celebrant will give you a small plastic bag with several consecrated communion wafers in it. You are not to consume it at church. Instead, take it home, say the prayers on the card and consume it with family and friends. You are the light of the world. Take the body of Christ with you this week and feed on it in your heart while praying for others.

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.

Communion Hymn: #181

Amazing Grace
Soloist: Lora Sellers

Please remain seated.

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. Alleluia, Alleluia.
People: **Thanks be to God, Alleluia, Alleluia.**

Recessional Hymn: #542 ***Christ is the world's true Light (Vs, 1,3)*** *Please stand as you are able.*



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