

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost



September 27, 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: #450

All hail the power of Jesus' Name (Vs. 1,2)

Pat Wilcox, Jean Lewis, Lora Sellers

Please stand as you are able.

Introduction:

Please be seated.

Celebrant: Welcome to Grace live in-person and online. We are glad you are with us today. We invite you to reach out to your friends and neighbors. Let them know there is a church in town that does not deal in guilt. Our lessons today involve this idea of the transfer of guilt and blame from one generation to another.

Taking a positive approach to the life God wants us to have, the sermon could be seen as a letter from our older generation to the next. Thank you for being part of this community today. We hope you will be more involved in making the world a better place. Bless you.

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: O God, you declare your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity: Grant us the fullness of your grace, that we, running to obtain your promises, may become partakers of your heavenly treasure; 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: Ezekiel 18:1-4,25-32

Please remain seated.

Reader: A reading from the book of Ezekiel.

The word of the Lord came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, "The way of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

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

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 25:1-8

Reader: To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my trust in you; *
People: **let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

Reader: Let none who look to you be put to shame; *
People: **let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.**

Reader: Show me your ways, O LORD, *
People: **and teach me your paths.**

Reader: Lead me in your truth and teach me, *
People: **for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.**

Reader: Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, *
People: **for they are from everlasting.**

Reader: Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; *
People: **remember me according to your love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.**

Reader: Gracious and upright is the LORD; *
People: **therefore he teaches sinners in his way.**

Reader: He guides the humble in doing right *
People: **and teaches his way to the lowly**

Second Lesson: Philippians 2:1-13

Reader: A reading from the book of Philippians.

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

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

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Gradual Hymn: #59

Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding (Vs.1,2,5)

Pat Wilcox, Jean Lewis, Lora Sellers

Please stand as you are able.

Gospel: Matthew 21:23-32

Please remain standing as you are able.

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

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

When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

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*

Please be seated.

Letting go of the Proverb, or Life after Guilt – a Letter to the Generations

In August, right here in Muskogee, I can take you into the vineyard to taste sour grapes. These green, unripe tannin grenades are designed by nature to make your mouth pucker like never before. Things called “proline receptors” on your tongue and salivary glands work overtime to counteract the bitter tannins in the grape, but to no avail. This time of year, the grapes win. No animal will eat unripe, sour grapes. When the grapes are ripe, their seeds are capable of sprouting. The lesson here is don’t fight mother nature. But Ezekiel tells us the parents have eaten sour grapes and their children’s teeth are set on edge.

What could he mean by that? Could it be that the children suffer because of the sins and misdeeds of their parents? Ezekiel is addressing the second generation of Israelite exiles living in Babylon. The dust has only settled for a few years following Nebuchadnezzar’s roundup of the Jerusalem leaders and elite and marching them 600 miles across the desert to live in a bone-dry ghetto. My guess is that the industrious Israelites do not yet have prospering farms, so they must depend upon the benevolence of the Babylonians. Daily existence on the west side of the river is grim and gritty. Some of the Israelites marry Babylonians and go on to live more comfortable lives. It will be another two decades before the Israelites are prosperous again. But this second generation wants to play the victim. “We are miserable because our parents sinned” they moan.

In fact, our readings today confront us with intergenerational transfer of guilt from Ezekiel to Matthew. It seems as if the planners of our selection of readings looked up and said to themselves, “All Saints Day is coming soon. Let’s have them think about the sins of their ancestors.” Speaking through the prophet in dusty Babylon, God demolishes this ancient idea of the sins of the father are passed down from generation to generation. Ezekiel mentions the righteous father, his unrighteous son and the righteous grandson as evidence of God’s justice. Each generation can take their fate in their own hands. God does not desire the death of anyone, but the prophet says that only those who sin shall die.

To read Ezekiel 18 as all about guilt and punishment is to miss the boat, the train, and the plane all in the same day. God declares to the whining Israelites, “Know that all lives are mine; the live of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine.” Ezekiel says this on God’s behalf NOT to justify God’s right to take or give life, but to emphasize that God does not even desire the death of sinners.

Common approaches to these Old Testament texts will focus on sin, guilt and punishment. The question will arise as to who gets punished for sins and then the transparent altar call so that you can be saved from your sins. I don’t buy into that and neither should you. If God does not desire punishment or death of anyone, then what are we sinners to do?

Here is my three-step proposal. First, we must let go. Let go of the proverb about the sins of the parents are visited on the generations to follow. I hear a lot of millennials these days making very serious, ugly jokes about “Boomers” (my generation) implying that the world is seriously messed up because of the failures of the Boomer generation. And you know what? The Millennials may be right. It would be easy to point to a dozen ways the world is worse today than forty years ago. But you don’t ever want to be dead right.

Like the second generation of Israelites exiled to Babylon, the Millennials today moan the same line. “Why did you put us here, God? We did not sin. Our parents did.” But step one requires letting go. Let go of these ideas that justify your current situation. You may be right that the parent’s generation failed at this or that thing. But to wallow in victimhood is to limit your possibilities. Boomer jokes today just keep the Millennial generation trapped in thinking it’s not their fault.

Step two in big, theological terms invites the new generation of Millennials to see themselves not as victims but as free, independent, autonomous moral agents – as children of God. I have heard more than one Boomer reply back to the Millennials, “Grow up, get a life, take responsibility.” That may be harsh, but it is correct.

Step three invites the Boomer generation to repent. God does not desire the death of anyone including Boomers. God desires life for everyone, but taking life seriously involves taking stock of what we have done to the world, our complicity and our negligence. We must understand, confess and repent. For example, in 1946, there were a few hundred man-made chemicals that could be found in our water supply. By 1976, the EPA under President Nixon regulated about 90 of those chemicals. Today, there are 90,000 different man-made chemicals in our waters. Few of them are regulated and most are not treated by city water systems. Many of these chemicals exert profound biological effects on humans and other animals. The Boomer generation cannot bury our head in the sand and say this slow-motion disaster was not our fault. It happened on our watch. We need to understand that Flint Michigan is a disaster made by the Boomer generation, and disasters like Flint are happening all over the planet every day. Can we, Boomers, in Muskogee Oklahoma repent of the things like this we have done and the things we have left undone?

Let’s circle back to the proverb about the children’s teeth are on edge because of the sins of their parents. For one group to see themselves as victims of another is to spin the world in a never-ending cycle of guilt and blame. Since God makes it clear through the prophet’s voice that God desires life above all else; therefore, God is open to repentance and change. The life that God offers to us demands that we tell the truth about our actions and that we take responsibility. This is what true repentance and amendment of life means. Tell the truth and do something about it.

Jesus asks, “What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.”

The vineyard is God’s offer of life. It is a world where truth is told, responsibility is taken, consequences are understood, and plans are made to change things so that everyone benefits. This is life. This is the kingdom of heaven. This is the Garden of Eden. This is the life together that God desires for all of us. When the son turned away from working in the vineyard, he was turning away from God’s desire and he was turning towards his own desires for money, security, pleasure, and fame. The first son repented and chose the life that God offers all of us. The second did not.

Your job is to choose wisely.

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 Martin's' Pryor; St. Paul's, Claremore; Posada de Belen, shelter for children living on the street, Diocese of Uruguay; Diocese of Pennsylvania; The Church of Ceylon.**

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, Isabella, 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: **Marlene, Jennifer, Leslie, Larry, Mary Ann.**

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:

Have Thine own way Lord

Pat Wilcox, Jean Lewis, 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: Ken Yadon

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: #479

Glory be to Jesus (Vs, 1, 2, 5)
Pat Wilcox, Jean Lewis, Lora Sellers

Please stand as you are able.



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