

September 6 Fr. Tom
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Collect:

Let us pray. Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

A Reading from Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 35:4-7

The prophet Isaiah writes a beautiful poem to the exiles in Babylon, longing for the people's return to their land. He describes his hopes in three images: political vindication of these oppressed people; healing for those who are ill or impaired; and the image of a dry barren desert turned into pools of cool living water. A reading from Isaiah:

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
 "Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
 He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
 He will come and save you."
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
 and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
 and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
 and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
 and the thirsty ground springs of water.

Psalm 146 (*responsively by whole verse*)

[803]

- 1 Hallelujah! Praise the LORD, O my soul! *
 I will praise the LORD as long as I live;
 I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.
- 2 Put not your trust in rulers, nor in any child of earth, *
 for there is no help in them.**
- 3 When they breathe their last, they return to earth, *
 and in that day their thoughts perish.
- 4 Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help! *
 whose hope is in the LORD their God;**
- 5 Who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them; *
 who keeps his promise for ever;
- 6 Who gives justice to those who are oppressed, *
 and food to those who hunger.**

7 The LORD sets the prisoners free;
the LORD opens the eyes of the blind; *
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;

**8 The LORD loves the righteous; the LORD cares for the stranger; *
he sustains the orphan and widow,
but frustrates the way of the wicked.**

9 The LORD shall reign for ever, *
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations.
Hallelujah!

The Epistle

James 2:1-10, 14-17

The author of this epistle continues to describe how upside down the world is for people of faith. Moral living, the outgrowth of genuine faith, includes seeing and treating all people as equals, regardless of their economic or social standing in the community. The author repeatedly emphasizes that the Christian life must include care for (and response to) those in need. A reading from James:

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

The Gospel

Mark 7:24-37

This story about Jesus healing a Gentile living in a Gentile community marks a major transition in Mark's understanding of Jesus' ministry. Having come initially to "the house of Israel," Jesus now reaches out to all sorts and conditions of people everywhere he goes.

September 13 Deacon Nancy
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Collect:

Let us pray. O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Hebrew Scripture

Proverbs 1:20-33

This reading comes from the introductory verses of the wisdom book of Proverbs. Like the original audience, we hear the feminine voice of Wisdom urging people to recognize the spiritual dimension of life. To do so is to open one's mind and heart to deeper living; failing to do so leads to unhealthy pursuits and a shallow life. A reading from Proverbs:

Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.
At the busiest corner she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?
Give heed to my reproof;
I will pour out my thoughts to you;
I will make my words known to you.
Because I have called and you refused,
have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,
and because you have ignored all my counsel
and would have none of my reproof,
I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when panic strikes you,
when panic strikes you like a storm,
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come upon you.
Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.
Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the LORD,
would have none of my counsel,
and despised all my reproof,
therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way
and be sated with their own devices.
For waywardness kills the simple,
and the complacency of fools destroys them;
but those who listen to me will be secure
and will live at ease, without dread of disaster."

Psalm 19 (*responsively by whole verse*)

[606]

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, *
and the firmament shows his handiwork.

2 One day tells its tale to another, *
and one night imparts knowledge to another.

3 Although they have no words or language, *

and their voices are not heard,

- 4 Their sound has gone out into all lands, *
and their message to the ends of the world.**
- 5 In the deep has he set a pavilion for the sun; *
it comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber;
it rejoices like a champion to run its course.
- 6 It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens
and runs about to the end of it again; *
nothing is hidden from its burning heat.**
- 7 The law of the LORD is perfect and revives the soul; *
the testimony of the LORD is sure
and gives wisdom to the innocent.**
- 8 The statutes of the LORD are just and rejoice the heart; *
the commandment of the LORD is clear
and gives light to the eyes.**
- 9 The fear of the LORD is clean and endures for ever; *
the judgments of the LORD are true
and righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold, *
sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.**
- 11 By them also is your servant enlightened, *
and in keeping them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can tell how often he offends? *
cleans me from my secret faults.**
- 13 Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins;
let them not get dominion over me; *
then shall I be whole and sound,
and innocent of a great offense.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my
heart be acceptable in your sight, *
O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.**

The Epistle

James 3:1-12

It is unclear whether these comments from the Epistle of James are directed to one particular teacher who was leading the people astray, or if the author is addressing religious teachers of his day in general. A reading from James:

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no

mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue-- a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

The Gospel

Mark 8:27-38

The author of Mark uses his editorial skills to link together three issues of primary importance in this earliest Gospel: who Jesus is and how he was perceived; the significant cost of following him; and the life-changing consequence of having faith in him.

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

September 20 Fr. Tom

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Collect:

Let us pray. 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.

A Reading from Hebrew Scripture

Wisdom of Solomon 1:16-2:1, 12-22

During the lengthy reign of King Solomon an extensive genre of wisdom literature developed. The Hebrew teachers believed that these wisdom teachings would be helpful guides for people of all nations. The Book of Wisdom is modeled after this earlier literature, but was probably written in the century prior to the birth of Jesus. The document incorporates concepts from ancient Jewish

Wisdom literature and the Greek Wisdom literature of the 2nd Century BCE. A reading from the Book of Wisdom:

The ungodly by their words and deeds summoned death;
considering him a friend, they pined away
and made a covenant with him,
because they are fit to belong to his company.
For they reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves,
"Short and sorrowful is our life,
and there is no remedy when a life comes to its end,
and no one has been known to return from Hades.
"Let us lie in wait for the righteous man,
because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions;
he reproaches us for sins against the law,
and accuses us of sins against our training.
He professes to have knowledge of God,
and calls himself a child of the Lord.
He became to us a reproof of our thoughts;
the very sight of him is a burden to us,
because his manner of life is unlike that of others,
and his ways are strange.
We are considered by him as something base,
and he avoids our ways as unclean;
he calls the last end of the righteous happy,
and boasts that God is his father.
Let us see if his words are true,
and let us test what will happen at the end of his life;
for if the righteous man is God's child, he will help him,
and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries.
Let us test him with insult and torture,
so that we may find out how gentle he is,
and make trial of his forbearance.
Let us condemn him to a shameful death,
for, according to what he says, he will be protected."
Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray,
for their wickedness blinded them,
and they did not know the secret purposes of God,
nor hoped for the wages of holiness,
nor discerned the prize for blameless souls.

== note, instead of The Word of the Lord, please conclude with: Here ends the reading. (no response from the people)

Psalm 54 *(responsively by whole verse)*

[659]

- 1 Save me, O God, by your Name; *
in your might, defend my cause.
- 2 Hear my prayer, O God; ***
give ear to the words of my mouth.
- 3 For the arrogant have risen up against me,

and the ruthless have sought my life, *
those who have no regard for God.

4 Behold, God is my helper; *
it is the Lord who sustains my life.

5 Render evil to those who spy on me; *
in your faithfulness, destroy them.

**6 I will offer you a freewill sacrifice *
and praise your Name, O LORD, for it is good.**

7 For you have rescued me from every trouble, *
and my eye has seen the ruin of my foes.

The Epistle

James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a

The author of this lengthy sermon draws a contrast between his readers' current conflicts and the empathy and mutual respect born of wisdom. Throughout this document, the author emphasizes that spiritual wisdom and righteousness go hand in hand. A reading from the book of James:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

The Gospel

Mark 9:30-37

Mark typically allows the words of Jesus to stand on their own merit, without interpretation or editorial comment. In this story we hear Jesus striving to teach his disciples about spiritual wisdom which is contrary to the everyday assumptions of society.

Jesus and his disciples went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him. Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

September 27 Deacon Laura
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Collect:

Let us pray. Everlasting God, you have ordained and constituted in a wonderful order the ministries of angels and mortals: Mercifully grant that, as your holy angels always serve and worship you in heaven, so by your appointment they may help and defend us here on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

A Reading from Hebrew Scripture

Genesis 28:10-17

After tricking his father Isaac into giving him the birthright due his older twin Esau, Jacob flees in fear for his life. The famous story of Jacob's dream marks a turning point in the saga of Abraham's ancestors. In this story Jacob appears alone for the first time in scripture, and he is confirmed as the inheritor of the promises to Abraham. A reading from Genesis:

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the LORD stood beside him and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place-- and I did not know it!" And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Psalm 103:19-22 734

- 19 The LORD has set his throne in heaven, *
and his kingship has dominion over all.
- 20 Bless the LORD, you angels of his,
you mighty ones who do his bidding, *
and hearken to the voice of his word.
- 21 Bless the LORD, all you his hosts, *
you ministers of his who do his will.
- 22 Bless the LORD, all you works of his,
in all places of his dominion; *
bless the LORD, O my soul.

The Epistle

Revelation 12:7-12

Like all apocalyptic writers, the author of Revelation is concerned with the cosmic struggle between good and evil, and with the impact of this struggle on human history. This particular legend offers one response to questions regarding the origin of evil and malevolence. A reading from Revelation:

War broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world-- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming,

"Now have come the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Messiah,
for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down,
who accuses them day and night before our God.
But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony,
for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.
Rejoice then, you heavens
and those who dwell in them!
But woe to the earth and the sea,
for the devil has come down to you with great wrath,
because he knows that his time is short!"

The Gospel

John 1:47-51

The author of this text uses a conversation between Jesus and Nathanael to portray Jesus as one with special insight and wisdom. The conversation is also used to foreshadow remarkable things to come.

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."