

THE FIFTH SUNDAY
AFTER EPIPHANY



"Have you not known? Have
you not heard?"

I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

THE CONFESSION

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor:

God of all mercy,
we confess that we have sinned against you,
opposing your will in our lives.
We have denied your goodness in each other,
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.
We repent of the evil that enslaves us,
the evil we have done, and the evil done on our behalf.
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us through our Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love and serve only your will. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ,
strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.



Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.

The mercy of the Lord is everlasting: Come let us adore him.

JUBILATE

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands;*
serve the Lord with gladness
and come before his presence with a song.

Know this: The Lord himself is God;*
he himself has made us and we are his;
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise;*
give thanks to him and call upon his Name.

For the Lord is good;
his mercy is everlasting,*
and his faithfulness endures from age to age.

Psalm 147:1-12, 21c

Laudate Dominum

1 Hallelujah!

How good it is to sing praises to our God! *
how pleasant it is to honor him with praise!

2 The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem; *
he gathers the exiles of Israel.

3 He heals the brokenhearted *
and binds up their wounds.

4 He counts the number of the stars *
and calls them all by their names.

5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; *
there is no limit to his wisdom.

6 The Lord lifts up the lowly, *
but casts the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; *
make music to our God upon the harp.

8 He covers the heavens with clouds *
and prepares rain for the earth;

9 He makes grass to grow upon the mountains *
and green plants to serve mankind.

10 He provides food for flocks and herds *
and for the young ravens when they cry.

11 He is not impressed by the might of a horse; *
he has no pleasure in the strength of a man;

12 But the Lord has pleasure in those who fear him, *
in those who await his gracious favor.

21 Hallelujah!

THE FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 40:21-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;
who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when he blows upon them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.
To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?
He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.
Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
"My way is hidden from the Lord,
and my right is disregarded by my God"?
Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

THE CANTICLE

Eternal light, shine in my heart;
eternal hope lift up my eyes;
eternal power, be my support;
eternal wisdom make me wise.

Eternal life, raise me from death;
eternal brightness, help me see;
eternal Spirit, give me breath;
eternal Savior, come to me;

until by your most costly grace,
invited by you holy word,
at last I come before your face
to know you, my eternal God.

*(c) Christopher Idle
(TH 1982 #465)*

THE SECOND LESSON

Mark 1:29-39

After Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Other assigned lessons: 1 Corinthians 9:15-23

REFLECTION

by
Norm Wright

Eternal Savior, come to us.

AMEN



In Mark's Gospel, Jesus begins his ministry by being a healer of mind, body, and spirit. Within the first two chapters there are no less than four distinct healing stories and a reference to his healing many others. Somebody who could help heal people of their illnesses, much less cure

them, was a rare commodity in Jesus' day. So many things we take for granted to heal illnesses related to our mental and physical health today were simply unknown to people of Jesus' day and for almost two thousand years thereafter. They didn't have hospitals, same day surgery, 24/7 urgent care facilities, or medical clinics and psychiatric services. The physicians that existed were few and largely took care of the rich and powerful. The common person was left to fend for herself and had only access to whatever common sense or home remedies she knew of to treat what ailed her.

When Jesus began healing people, word spread very quickly. A panicked sense of urgency must have been what it was like for those who heard about his healing abilities, then trying to locate where he was, and then crowding-in to have a once in a lifetime opportunity to be cured from something that was incurable. The people-press on Jesus must have been tremendous. It is no wonder then that when the sun went down and people went away for the night, Jesus snuck out in the early morning to find a deserted place to pray in solitude. It is also no wonder that when the sun was up and people were gathering that Peter and the rest of the disciples went out searching for Jesus and when they found him said, "Everyone is searching for you."

During this pandemic we have been faced with something that is elusive and, as yet, beyond our control. While there are vaccines available that will hopefully result in a dramatic decrease in the number of cases and put an end to this pandemic, we find ourselves waiting and experiencing a sense of urgency in being able to access something that can save us from this dreaded virus.

Throughout this pandemic our thoughts have been turned to what medicine and governments can do. We wonder if there will be a return to the normal we had or if we will be faced with a new normal. Patience is wearing thin. In all of this wondering and wandering about in the wilderness of "what if's," Jesus seems to have gone missing.

We don't hear much about the need for Jesus in what we're dealing with. We pray for the sick, the doctors, and those on the front-line of this pandemic. We pray for the scientists and those developing vaccines, as we should, but we seem to come short of asking Jesus to come and lend a healing hand in all that ails us. There are times when it would appear that we have called off the search for Jesus.

In these reflections, I have made a point of saying that God goes where we go whether we are aware of it or whether we give credence to God's presence our lives. While that is true, there remains a spiritual need of ours, a soulful (whole person) need to consciously and intentionally seek God; to search for the healing that Jesus offers because the healing Jesus offers is not a mere physical, mental, or spiritual healing but rather a healing of the whole soul, the whole person.

We don't have a cure for what ails the whole soul. We don't have a vaccine against the spiritual malaise that can arise when there is a sense of urgency and our patience wears thin. At times like these, we tend to get lost in our "go-it-alone" mindsets that can delude us into thinking seeking God is a waste of time or the more dangerous mindset that leads people to believe that taking matters into their own hands, including violence against others, is doing what God wants them to do. We followers of Jesus know better.

This morning's first lesson asks a set of questions that both awakens and invites us to look at the truths we know but frequently choose to ignore and side-step. Isaiah asks, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told to you from the beginning?" Isaiah tells us that God has the power to strengthen us if we but relinquish our desire to go it alone, that "those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles."

I used to teach a course on the human rights of the mentally ill in which I defined reality as a consensus of perceptions; that what generally identifies someone as dealing with a mental illness is when that person consistently presents a perception or acts in a way that does not coincide with the commonly held consensus of what reality is. Our grasp of reality is not as certain as one might think. We can create a multitude of realities as individuals or as groups of individuals. In fact, history gives recent examples of nations that have created a reality of their own making. Isaiah tells us that there is a reality that pre-existed and prevails over any consensus of reality that we may have. It is no wonder then that many of the prophets and Jesus himself were accused of being insane as he and they frequently upended the consensus of what seemed to be the reality of the time.

One of my favorite healing stories of Jesus is found in the second chapter of the Gospel of Mark. It is the story of Jesus healing a paralyzed man, whose family and friends are so desperate to have him healed that they literally dismantle the roof of the house where Jesus is to lower the man to Jesus because they couldn't get in through the door because there were so many people trying to see Jesus. When Jesus saw the faith they put into his ability to heal this person, Jesus says, "Son, your sins are forgiven." That probably wasn't what this man's family and friends were thinking Jesus would do or what they wanted him to do.

In the room where Jesus was healing and teaching there were teachers of the Judaic law. The consensus of the time was that an illness such as this man had was the direct result of sin, either his own or a member of his family. When Jesus told this man his sin was forgiven, they thought Jesus was not only mad but also that he was a blasphemer because only God could forgive sins. Jesus questions them, "Is it easier to say to this man your sins are forgiven or to say get up, take your mat, and walk." With that Jesus heals the man of his paralysis. Jesus healed the whole person, the whole soul.

There is a greater reality than the realities of our making. It is a reality that is interwoven in the narrative of our scriptures. It is a reality that frequently takes to task our sense of the way we think things are or should be. It is the reality grounded in the realm of God, that creating and recreating love of God which is accessible to those who seek it. So let us renew our search for Jesus and for the healing of the whole person and the whole of creation that he offers. After all, we do know because we have heard the Good News. We know there is a healing of what the well-known Gospel hymn calls the sin-sick soul.

Amen

Hymn

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*

***Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.***

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*

***If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot preach like Paul,
you can tell the love of Jesus, and say he died for all***

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*

***Don't ever be discouraged for Jesus is your friend,
and if you lack for knowledge he'll ne'er refuse to lend***

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*

*(Traditional Spiritual)
(LEVAS II #203)*



THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of Love, we pray for the whole Church and our parish family. Guide your Church and this parish in the way of truth and love.

God of Healing, we pray for all those who are suffering from the effects of Covid-19. We pray for those in our church family and those requesting our prayers: Bernard, Sue, Bev Ann, Pat Michels, Jolene, Darold, Somer, Ryan, and for those we hold in our hearts. May all those in need experience the comfort and healing of your presence.

God of Joy, we pray for those celebrating birthdays: Bev Ann Christensen (Feb. 9), Peg Michael (Feb.10), Karen Michels and Josh O'Gorman (Feb. 12). May they find joy, happiness, and fulfillment in the coming year.

God our Protector, we pray for those affected by Covid-19; for healthcare workers around the world; for those who provide essential services, first responders, fire fighters, police. We pray for the leaders of all nations, for all government officials every where, and for all those making decisions in times of crisis. Grant them protection and guide those in authority to make wise decisions.

God our Defender, we pray for the homeless and the jobless in our nation, and for those who have lost their homeland, their sense of security, and who find themselves dependent on the good will of others here at home and in strange lands; that their needs are met and grant them the comfort of your Holy Spirit.

God of Life, we pray for those who have died. On this Sunday we pray for Pat Christensen. May Pat and all the departed find life in you.

God of Mission, we pray for all bishops, priests, deacons, and all who serve your Church. Grant them guidance in their various ministries and guide us in our mission to enlarge the Family of Faith in our midst.

A PRAYER FOR OUR NATION

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move the hearts of the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

THE PRAYER FOR MISSION

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near; Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



**MAY THE LORD BLESS US AND KEEP US.
MAY THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON US AND BE
GRACIOUS UNTO US.
MAY THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON US AND GIVE US
PEACE. AMEN**

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