

# Holy Eucharist

October 1, 2023

Zoom link:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/85887946777?pwd=eig94MEdsMUh6clV6b2dUblFOQ3I2Zzo>

9

Meeting ID: 858 8794 6777

Passcode: 782611

## Proper 21A: the 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

### Prelude

### Opening Hymn

*Only-begotten, Word of God eternal*

Tune: *Christe sanctorum*

On- ly- be- got- ten, Word of God e  
This is your tem- ple; here your pre- sence-  
Here in our sick- ness heal- ing grace a-  
God in three Per- sons, Fa- ther ev- er-

--ter- nal, Lord of cre- a- tion, mer- ci- ful and  
cham- ber; here may your ser- vants, at the mys- tic  
-bounding, light in our blind- ness; in our toil, re-  
-last- ing, Son co-e- ter- nal, e- ver- bless- éd

might- ty, hear now your ser- vants when their joy- ful  
ban- quet, hum- ly a- dor- ing, take your Bo- dy  
-fresh- ment: sin is for- gi- ven , hope o'er fear pre-  
Spi- rit, yours be the glo- ry, praise, and a- do-

voi- ces rise to your pre- sence.  
bro- ken, drink of your chal- ice.  
-vail- ing, joy o- ver sor- row.  
-ra- tion, now and for- ev- er.

*Presider* Blessed be + God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*People* **And blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.**

The Presider begins the Collect for Purity

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.**

The following is sung, all standing as they are able

### Song of Praise

Great is the Lord

### Chorus Book 178

*Unison*

Chords: C, Dm7, G, G7/B, C, F, G

Great is the Lord; He is ho - ly and just. By His pow - er we trust in His

Chords: F, C/E, Dm7, C, Dm7, G, G7/B, C

love. Great is the Lord; He is faith - ful and true. By His

Chords: F, G, F, C/E, Dm7, C

mer - cy He proves He is love.

*Parts*

1, 2. Great is the Lord and  
(D.S.) Great are You, Lord, and

F C Dm7 C Bb C F G G7 B C

wor-thy of glo-ry! Great is the Lord and wor-thy of praise!  
 wor-thy of glo-ry! Great are You, Lord, and wor-thy of praise!

Bb C D Em7 D F# G G F E Am E Am

Great is the Lord! Now lift up your voice: Now lift up your voice;  
 Great are You, Lord! I lift up my voice; I lift up my voice:

Dm7 F6 G G7 E G G7 Am Am G

Great \_\_\_\_\_ is the Lord!  
 Great \_\_\_\_\_ are You, Lord!

Dm7 F6 G G7 E G G7 1 C D.C. 2 C D.S. 3 C

Great \_\_\_\_\_ is the Lord! \_\_\_\_\_ Lord!  
 Great \_\_\_\_\_ are You, \_\_\_\_\_ Lord!

### Collect of the Day

*Presider*            The Lord be with you.  
*People*                **And also with you.**  
*Presider*            Let us pray.

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.**

*All sit.*

## **First Reading**

Exodus 17:1-7

A Reading from the book of Exodus.

<sup>1</sup>From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup>The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" <sup>3</sup>But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" <sup>4</sup>So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." <sup>5</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. <sup>6</sup>I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. <sup>7</sup>He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

*Reade* The Word of the Lord.

*People* **Thanks be to God.**

## **Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16**

*to be prayed in unison*

- <sup>1</sup>Hear my teaching, O my people; \*  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.**
- <sup>2</sup>I will open my mouth in a parable; \*  
I will declare the mysteries of ancient times.**
- <sup>3</sup>That which we have heard and known,  
and what our forefathers have told us, \*  
we will not hide from their children.**
- <sup>4</sup>We will recount to generations to come  
the praiseworthy deeds and the power of the LORD, \*  
and the wonderful works he has done.**
- <sup>12</sup>He worked marvels in the sight of their forefathers, \*  
in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.**
- <sup>13</sup>He split open the sea and let them pass through; \*  
he made the waters stand up like walls.**
- <sup>14</sup>He led them with a cloud by day, \*  
and all the night through with a glow of fire.**
- <sup>15</sup>He split the hard rocks in the wilderness \***

**and gave them drink as from the great deep.**  
**<sup>16</sup>He brought streams out of the cliff, \***  
**and the waters gushed out like rivers.**

## **Second Reading**

Philippians 2:1-13

A Reading from Paul's letter to the Church in Philippi.

<sup>1</sup>If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, <sup>2</sup>make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,

<sup>7</sup>but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

<sup>8</sup>he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup>Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup>and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

<sup>12</sup>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; <sup>13</sup>for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

*Reader*    **The Word of the Lord.**

*People*    **Thanks be to God.**

*All then stand as they are able.*

## **Sequence Hymn**

*Rock of ages, cleft for me*

**Hymnal 685**



1 Rock of a - ges, cleft for me, let me hide my - self in thee;  
 2 Should my tears for ev - er flow, should my zeal no lan - guor know,  
 3 While I draw this fleet-ing breath, when mine eye - lids close in death,

let the wa - ter and the blood from thy wound - ed side that flowed,  
 all for sin could not a - tone: thou must save, and thou a - lone;  
 when I rise to worlds un - known and be - hold thee on thy throne,

be of sin the dou-ble cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power.  
 in my hand no price I bring, sim - ply to thy cross I cling.  
 Rock of a - ges, cleft for me, let me hide my - self in thee.

## Holy Gospel

Matthew 21:23-32

*Gospeller* The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

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

<sup>23</sup>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?" <sup>24</sup>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. <sup>25</sup>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?' <sup>26</sup>But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." <sup>27</sup>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.

<sup>28</sup>"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in

the vineyard today.’<sup>29</sup> He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup>The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. <sup>31</sup>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. <sup>32</sup>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.”



*Gospeller* The Gospel of the Lord.  
*People* **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

## **Sermon**

Bill Stech

*All then stand as they are able.*

## **Nicene Creed**

*Presider* Let us affirm the faith of the Church using the words of the Nicene Creed.

**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,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
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 [and the Son],  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who 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.**

*All remain standing as they are able.*

## **Prayers of the People**

*Presider* Brothers and sisters, children of God, in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Humbly then, let us approach our God, saying, “To will and work for your good pleasure, O Lord, enable us.”

*Intercessor* Christ Jesus, strengthen our tongues to declare you as Lord of our lives. May we, your Church, glorify your Heavenly Parent in word and deed. To will and work for your good pleasure, **O Lord, enable us.**

*Silence is kept*

Christ Jesus, you chose not to exploit your equality with God, but humbled yourself to be with us. Give us your heart for the marginalized and poor. And may all people, especially those in power, follow your example of humility. To will and work for your good pleasure, **O Lord, enable us.**

*Silence is kept*

Christ Jesus, by your birth in human likeness, you blessed all of creation. Remind us that your feet have trod our soil and tasted our waters. Give us the will to care for this precious planet. To will and work for your good pleasure, **O Lord, enable us.**

*Silence is kept*

Christ Jesus, you rule the world with love and compassion. Give to our local leaders compassion and vision that the people of our region might live as neighbors, looking out for each other’s interests. To will and work for your good pleasure, **O Lord, enable us.**

*Silence is kept*

Christ Jesus, you are ruler of all things in heaven and earth. Hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all a burning heart for our congregation, and all things necessary for our common life, and the embrace of the ministries with which you have gifted everyone. Bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church. To will and work for your good pleasure, **O Lord, enable us.**

*Silence is kept*



Christ Jesus, you became obedient to the point of death that we might have abundant life. Work marvels in the lives of the sick and sorrowful [especially\_\_\_\_\_]. May they recount to generations the wonderful deeds you have done in their lives. May [\_\_\_\_\_ and all] those who now rest from their labors find their comfort in you. Let light perpetual shine upon them. To will and work for your good pleasure, **O Lord, enable us.**

*Silence is kept*

*Presider* For what other people and situations shall we pray today?

O Lord our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people; in the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. **Amen.**

## **Confession of Sin**

*The Presider says to the people*

Let us confess our sins to God.

*All remain standing, or kneel, as they are able.*

*Silence may be kept.*

*Minister and People*

**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.**

*A Priest stands and says*

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

## **Prayers for those celebrating their birthdays and anniversaries**

*In October, we celebrate the birthdays of Bob, Josie, Doug, and any others you wish to remember in prayer. We also celebrate the anniversaries of Mike & Leslie and Jim & Mary*

O God, our times are in your hand. **Look with favor, we pray, on your servants Bob, Josie, Doug ..., as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which your Son gave his life, and especially upon Mike & Leslie and Jim & Mary [and all couples]. Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may continue to grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their lives. **Amen.**

*All then stand as they are able.*

## **Peace**

*Presider* The peace of Christ be always with you.

*People* **And also with you.**

*Then the Ministers and the People may greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

*The People then are seated.*

## **Announcements**

## **Holy Communion**

*Presider* O Lord our God, you are worthy to receive glory and honor and power; because you have created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. *Revelation 4:11*

*The people stand as they are able when the offerings are presented and placed on the Altar.*

## **Offertory Hymn**

## **Doxology**

**Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, you heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

*The people remain standing as they are able*

# Great Thanksgiving

*Presider* The Lord be with you.  
*People* **And also with you.**  
*Presider* Lift up your hearts.  
*People* **We lift them to the Lord.**

*Presider* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*People* **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*The Presider proceeds*

God of all power, Ruler of the Universe, you are worthy of glory and praise.  
**Glory to you for ever and ever.**

At your command all things came to be:  
the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses,  
and this fragile earth, our island home.

**By your will they were created and have their being.**

From the primal elements you brought forth  
the human race, and blessed us with memory, reason, and skill. You made us  
the rulers of creation. But we turned against you, and betrayed your trust;  
and we turned against one another.

**Have mercy, Lord, for we are sinners in your sight.**

Again and again, you called us to return.

Through prophets and sages you revealed your righteous Law. And in the fullness of time  
you sent your only Son, born of a woman,  
to fulfill your Law, to open for us the way  
of freedom and peace.

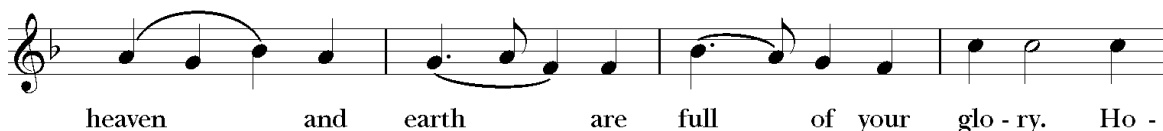
**By his blood, he reconciled us.**

**By his wounds, we are healed.**

And therefore we praise you, joining with

the heavenly chorus, with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and with all those in every  
generation who have looked to you in hope, to proclaim with them your glory, in their  
unending hymn:

## *Sanctus*



san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -

san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

*The people continue to stand, or kneel as they are able.*

*The Presider continues*

And so, Father, we who have been redeemed  
by him, and made a new people by water  
and the Spirit, now bring before you these gifts.

Sanctify them + by your Holy Spirit to be  
the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord.

On the night he was betrayed he took bread,  
said the blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to his friends, 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,  
gave thanks, 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.”

Remembering now his work of redemption,  
and offering to you this sacrifice  
of thanksgiving,  
**We celebrate his death and resurrection,  
as we await the day of his coming.**

Lord God of our Parents; God of Abraham & Sarah, Isaac & Rebekkah,  
and Jacob, Leah and Rachel; God and Father of our Lord  
Jesus Christ: Open our eyes to see your hand  
at work in the world about us...  
Deliver us from the presumption of coming  
to this Table for solace only, and  
not for strength; for pardon only, and  
not for renewal. Let the grace of this

Holy Communion make us one body,  
one spirit in Christ, that we may worthily serve the world in his name.  
**Risen Lord, be known to us in the breaking of the Bread.**

Accept these prayers and praises, Father,  
through Jesus Christ our great High Priest,  
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,  
your Church gives honor, glory, and worship, from generation to generation. **AMEN.**

*The Presider then continues*

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

### **Breaking of the Bread**

*A period of silence is kept.*

*The Presider says*

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;  
**Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

The Gifts of God for the People of God.  
Holy food for holy people.

*All are welcome to receive Holy Communion.*

*When all have received, the Presider then says*

Let us pray.

*Presider and People*

**Eternal God, heavenly Father,  
you have graciously accepted us as living members  
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,**

**and you have fed us with spiritual food  
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.  
Send us now into the world in peace,  
and grant us strength and courage  
to love and serve you  
with gladness and singleness of heart;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### **Blessing**

*A priest blesses the people, saying*

May God give you Grace never to  
sell yourself short:  
Grace to risk something big for something good.  
Grace to remember that the world  
is too dangerous for anything but truth  
and too small for anything but Love.

And the blessing of God Almighty, +  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you, and remain with you this day and  
always. **Amen.**

### **Closing Hymn**

*Trust and obey*

**LEVAS 205**

1. When we walk with the Lord In the light of His word, What a glo - ry He  
3. Not a bur - den we bear, Not a sor - row we share, But our toil He doth  
5. When in fel - low-ship sweet We will sit at His feet, Or we'll walk by His

1. sheds on our way! While we do His good will, He a - bides with us still,  
3. rich - ly re - pay; Not a grief nor a loss, Not a frown nor a cross,  
5. side in the way; What He says we will do, Where He sends we will go,—

1. And with all who will trust and o - bey.  
 3. But is blest if we trust and o - bey. Trust and o - bey, for there's  
 5. Nev - er fear, on - ly trust and o - bey.

no oth - er way To be hap - py in Je - sus, But to trust and o - bey.

**Dismissal**

*Minister* And now, my sisters and brothers, I bid you go out as did St Barnabas, the  
 Encourager. Go out in peace to love and serve our Lord.  
*People* **Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude**

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**This week in prayer**

**Please remember these persons and congregations in your prayers this week:**

**Our Bishops** Bonnie, Michael, Justin, Moises (TEC); Elizabeth, Donald and Craig (ELCA)  
**and for** all priests, deacons, Ministry Teams, and those in formation

**Anglican Cycle of Prayer:**

October 1 The Anglican Church of Kenya

**Diocese of Michigan Cycle of Prayer:**

October 1 St David's, Southfield; Church of the Great Commission, Doña Lila; St Margaret's,  
 Santo Domingo, DR

**St Barnabas Cycle of Prayer:** Karyn, Rob, Joan, Patricia

**and our continuing prayers for:** Bob, Carlos, Jim M, Mardi, Robert, Selenah

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**Faith in Action** continues to provide leadership in collecting donations of food to support households in need in the Chelsea and Dexter areas. **The need is great** for our support and

help. You may bring your donations to FIA, or to [Nancy](#) who will see that they get there. **If you bring food directly to FIA**, please let Nancy know, so she can continue to keep our records of donation. If you write a check, please make it to *Faith In Action*. The **next Food Drive is October 15**. Please contribute as generously as you can.

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### Upcoming Commemorations

- Oct 01 Remigius of Rheims, Bishop, c. 530
- 03 John Raleigh Mott, Lay Leader and Ecumenist, 1955; and,  
George Kennedy Allen Bell, Bishop and Ecumenist, 1958
- 04 Henrietta Lacks, Medical pioneer, 1920-1951; and,  
Francis of Assisi, Friar and Deacon, 1226
- 06 William Tyndale, Priest, 1536
- 07 Henry Melchior Muhlenberg: Lutheran Pastor in North America, 1787

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Although **Henrietta Lacks** has not been declared a saint, or even “blessed,” Christians are called to honor her on the day of her death in 1951.

Henrietta was an African-American woman whose cancer cells are the source of the *HeLa* cell line, the first immortalized human cell line, and one of the most important cell lines in medical research. An immortalized cell line reproduces indefinitely under specific conditions, and the *HeLa* cell line continues to be a source of invaluable medical data to the present day.

Lacks was the unwitting source of these cells, from a tumor biopsied during treatment for cervical cancer at Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1951. These cells were then cultured by George Otto Gey, who created the cell line known as *HeLa*, which is still used for medical research.

In a sermon given in 2012, Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori said, “During her medical treatment, and even after her death, [Henrietta’s] cells were harvested by medical professionals, without her knowledge or that of her family, and without compensation. Some of you know about *HeLa* cells, the first human cell line to be cultivated in the laboratory. Those cells produced enormous wealth for the companies that figured out how to grow them and develop diagnostic tests and diverse treatments for cancer. They have produced great good as well, though not for the person or family from which they came. Henrietta Lacks couldn’t access the same level of treatment as her white neighbors in 1951, and her late diagnosis and death were likely related to that reality. The benefits her cell line has produced are still not equitably shared. This would be a different story, at least in part, if her cells had been given rather than taken.”





We, as human beings and as Christians, owe our thanks and gratitude to Henrietta. May the good in her story live on in the world; may we be forgiven for the suffering in it, and may she rest in peace and rise in glory.

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**October 1, 2023 – Proper 21A, Pentecost 18**

**Exodus 17:1-7**

Once again, the Israelites are complaining to Moses about their circumstances. In spite of the 10 plagues; in spite of their deliverance on the shores of the Red Sea; in spite of the manna and quails that God had recently rained down from heaven, the people of Israel are convinced that Moses has brought “[them] out of Egypt, to kill [them].” For Moses, this is not just a challenge to his leadership but a direct test of God’s presence and surety; it is an unforgivable demonstration of doubt. Yet God exhibits great patience and demonstrates great power by providing the Israelites with a new source of water.

These Exodus stories from the wilderness of Sinai are a wonderful reminder of both the human instinct to stray and the divine instinct to forgive. One would think that after all that God had done for the Israelites, they would never doubt God’s love and steadfastness; similarly, after all of their missteps, one would understand if God had had enough with the Israelites. Yet here are the people of Israel forgetting that God provides and here is God, loving these people and taking care of their needs.

- How might you fail to notice God’s love and care in your life?
- What might be possible in your life if you took God’s forgiveness for granted?

**Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16**

This psalm selection was chosen to coincide with the Exodus reading because of its obvious symmetry with the Torah passage. Psalm 78 is a historical psalm—one part focused on Israel’s time in the wilderness and the other portion focused on the early years of the Israelites’ time in Canaan. This psalm is a wonderful reminder of the wide diversity found in the Book of Psalms – from praise to lament to triumph to teaching. The psalms are never just one thing and Psalm 78 is a perfect example of that.

- How do you think the importance of the psalms to our worship might change the way we think about and interact with God? How does the inherent diversity of this book affect our religious understanding?

**Philippians 2:1-13**

Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi is one of his more good-natured letters; Paul is proud and happy with the community and how they have been carrying on. This passage presents us with some of the specific advice that Paul has to offer the community: Be humble and generous. Paul explicitly connects these virtues with Jesus, describing how Jesus “emptied himself,” even though he had every right to assert his divine dominance. Some scholars believe that verses 6-11 are actually quotations from a hymn that would have been familiar to both Paul and the Philippian church. In a world that continues to prize opulence, self-promotion, and expressions of power,

this small passage is a valuable reminder of the virtues valued by the Early Church and how they were understood to be embodied in the story and life of Jesus.

- What do you think it means for Jesus to “empty himself”? How might we, as Christians, emulate that?
- What do you make of the paradox that by humbling himself, Jesus was exalted?

**Matthew 21:23-32**

This passage places us in Jerusalem in the days before Jesus’ arrest and execution. Jesus has already entered the city in triumph and cleansed the Temple of its money changers and animal vendors. The Jewish leaders are trying to catch Jesus in a trap and approach him with this seemingly innocent query: By whose authority did he heal and teach? Of course, Jesus is too clever for the chief priests and the elders and turns the question back on them, stumping them when asking the same question about John the Baptist.

Jesus then clarifies who his ministry is for by telling a parable about two sons sent out into the fields to work. As illustrated by this story, it does not matter what a person says but rather what their actions are. The leaders in Jerusalem might have more power and prestige, but their actions fall short of what is desirable; they can talk the talk but do not always follow through. Jesus contrasts this with the “tax collectors and prostitutes” who are marred on the exterior but recognize their shortcomings and take action by seeking repentance from John the Baptist and, eventually, Jesus. They know that they need God, and they actively pursue God’s love and care.

- Does placing this story in the week before Jesus’ death change how you receive it?
- When in your life are you more like the chief priests and the elders? When are you more like the tax collectors?

*This Bible study was written by Tim Hamlin*

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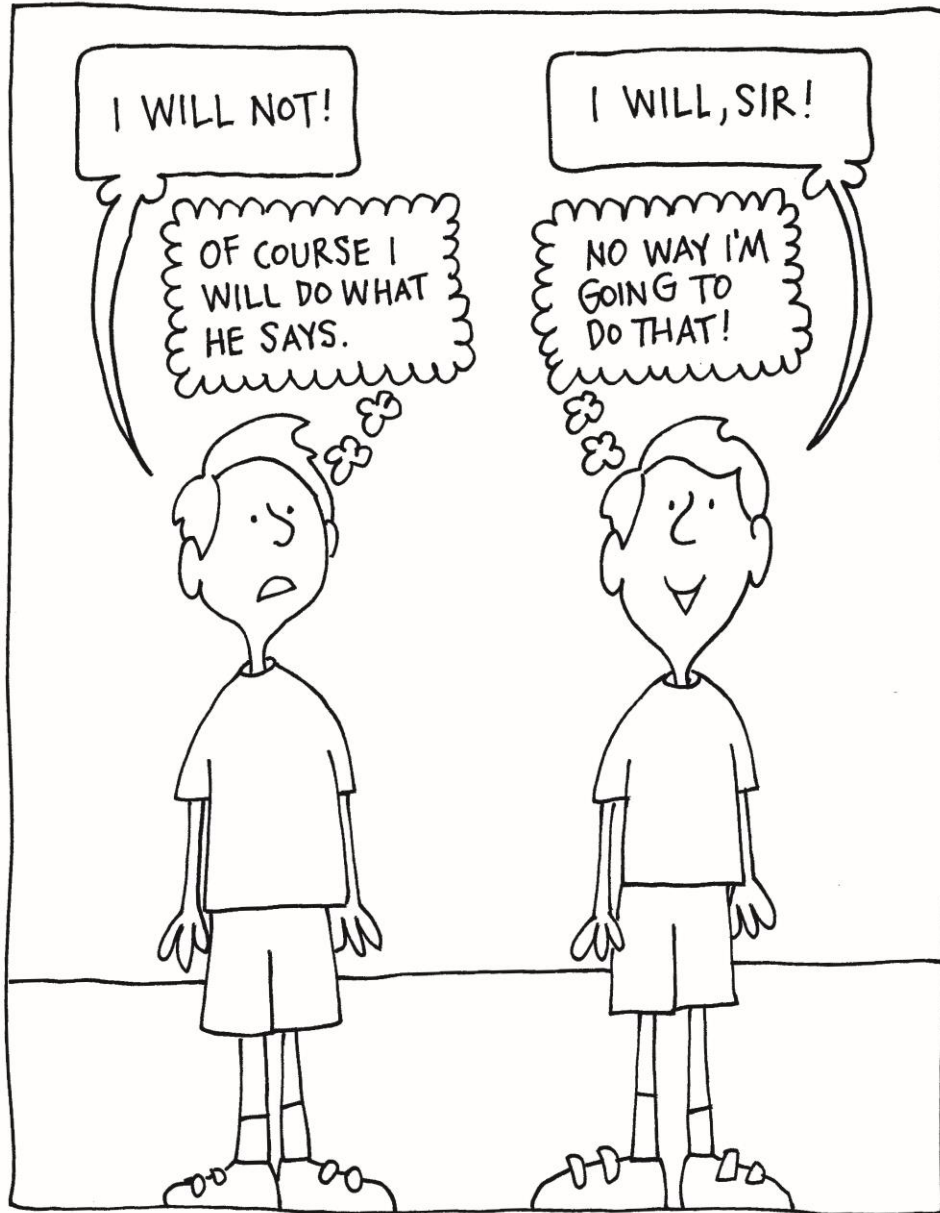
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**Opening Hymn:** text found at *Hymnal* #360; tune *Christe sanctorum* found at *Hymnal* #1

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**Our Mission:**

We seek to grow as diverse disciples of Jesus Christ,  
and to serve Jesus by serving others in the world,  
guided by the values of Ancient Rites, Open Minds, and Affirming Hearts.



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