

Holy Eucharist

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 12B

July 25, 2021

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85887946777?pwd=eig4MEdsMUh6clV6b2dUblFOQ3I2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 858 8794 6777

Passcode: 782611

Prelude

Opening Hymn

We the Lord's people

Tune: *Christe Sanctorum*



We the Lord's peo- ple, heart and voice u-
This is the Lord's house, home of all God's
This is the Lord's day, day of God's own



-ni- ting, praise God who called us out of sin and
peo- ple, school for the faith- ful, re- fuge for the
ma- king, day of cre- a- tion, day of re- sur-



dark- ness in- to his own light, that God might a-
sin- ner, rest for the pil- grim, ha- ven for the
-rec- tion, day of the Spi- rit, sign of hea- ven's



-noint us a roy- al priest- hood.
wear- y; all find a wel- come.
ban- quet, day for re- joi- cing.

All standing as they are able, the Officiant says

Blessed be God: Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit.

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

The Officiant 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

Glory to God

Gloria in excelsis

The musical score is written on a single staff in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests. The lyrics are written below the staff, aligned with the notes. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The lyrics are: "Glo-ry to God in the high - estand", "14 peace to God's peo - ple, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth. Lord God, heavenly", "19 King, Al - mighty God and Fa - ther, we wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we", "25 praise you for your glo - ry. Lord, Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the", "31 Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God. You take a - way all the sin of the".

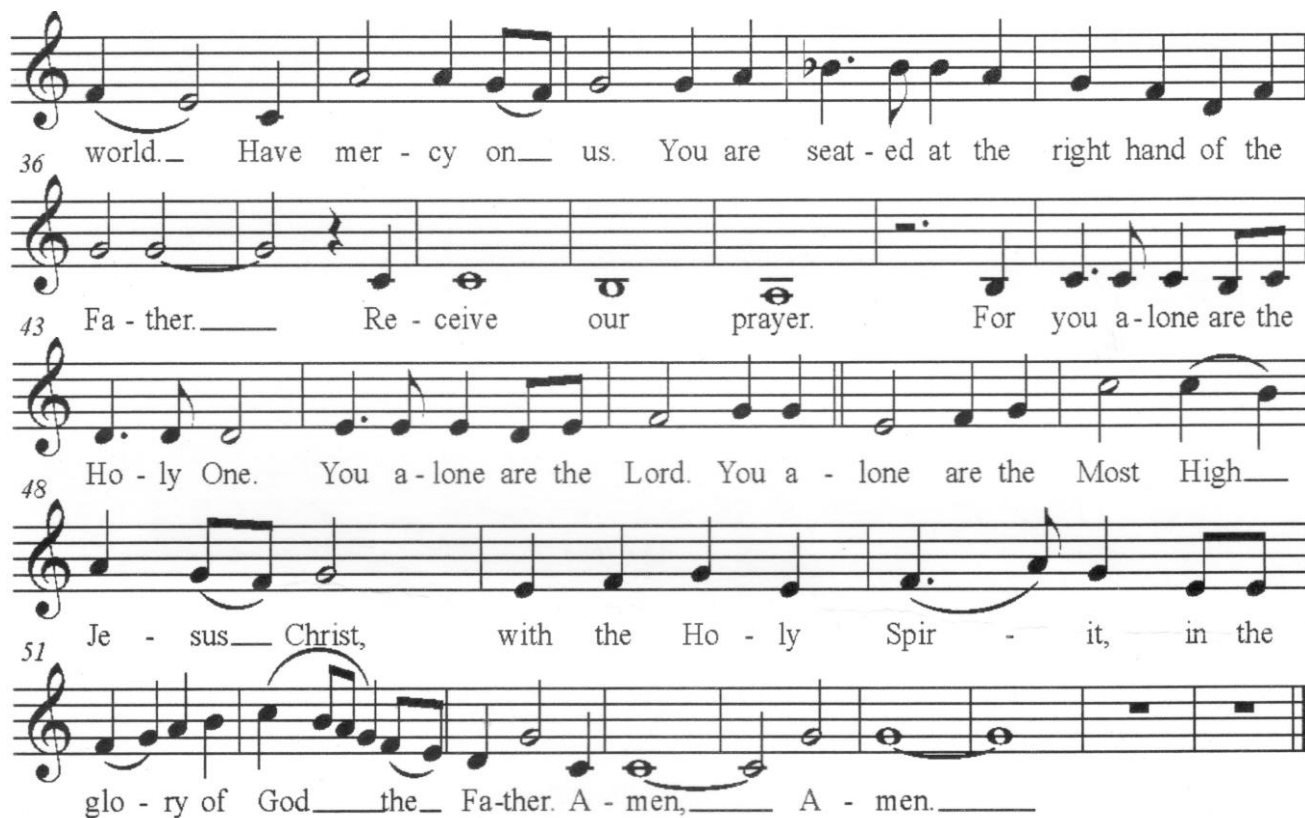
Glo-ry to God in the high - estand

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19 King, Al - mighty God and Fa - ther, we wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we

25 praise you for your glo - ry. Lord, Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the

31 Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God. You take a - way all the sin of the



Collect of the Day

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

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; 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

2 Samuel 11:1-15

A Reading from the Second book of Samuel.

¹In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

²It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful.

³David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, “This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” ⁴So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. ⁵The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”

⁶So David sent word to Joab, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. ⁸Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house, and wash your feet.” Uriah went out of the king’s house, and there followed him a present from the king. ⁹But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰When they told David, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?” ¹¹Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.” ¹²Then David said to Uriah, “Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, ¹³David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

¹⁴In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵In the letter he wrote, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.”

Reader The word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalms 14

¹The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” *

All are corrupt and commit abominable acts;
there is none who does any good.

²**The LORD looks down from heaven upon us all, ***
to see if there is any who is wise,
if there is one who seeks after God.

³Every one has proved faithless;
all alike have turned bad; *
there is none who does good; no, not one.

⁴**Have they no knowledge, all those evildoers ***
who eat up my people like bread
and do not call upon the LORD?

⁵See how they tremble with fear, *
because God is in the company of the righteous.

⁶**Their aim is to confound the plans of the afflicted, ***
but the LORD is their refuge.

⁷Oh, that Israel’s deliverance would come out of Zion! *

**when the LORD restores the fortunes of his people,
Jacob will rejoice and Israel be glad.**

Second Reading

Ephesians 3:14-21

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

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Reader The word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

All stand as they are able.

Sequence Hymn

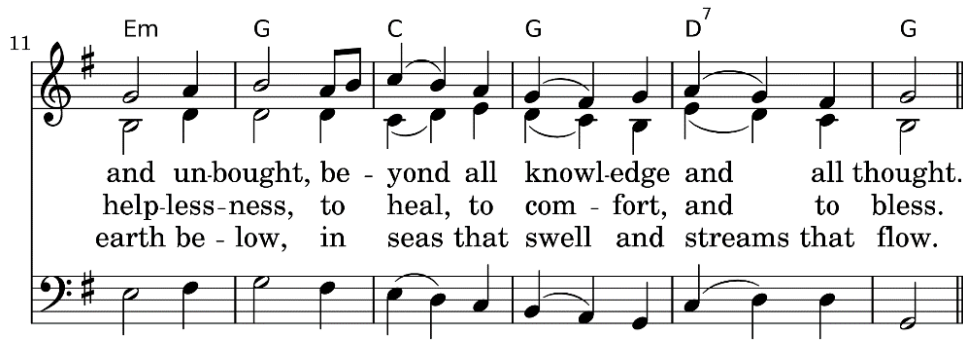
Tune: Wareham

O love of God, how strong and true

The musical score is written for a three-part setting (Soprano, Alto, and Tenor/Bass) in 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is primarily in the soprano part, with the alto and tenor parts providing harmonic support. The lyrics are arranged in three lines, with the first line corresponding to measures 1-5, the second line to measures 6-10, and the third line to measures 11-15. The score includes chord symbols above the notes: G, Am⁷, G, C, D⁷, G, D, G, A, D, C, G.

1 O love of God, how strong and true, e - ter - nal
2 O heaven-ly love, how pre - cious still in days of
3 O wide - em-brac-ing, won - drous love! We read you

and yet ev - er new, un - com - pre-hend - ed
wea - ri - ness and ill, in nights of pain and
in the sky a - bove, we read you in the



Holy Gospel

John 6:1-21

*Gospeller
People*

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
Glory to you, Lord Christ.

¹Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ²A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. ³Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. ⁵When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." ¹³So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

¹⁵When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

¹⁶When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. ²⁰But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." ²¹Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

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

Sermon

All stand as they are able.

Nicene Creed

Officiant 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

Officiant: Gracious God of abundance, you feed the hungry from your hand, and visit us in our storms: Hear your people as we pray for the whole world, saying: may we know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Intercessor: Give to your Church, O God, the power to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ. We pray for our bishops Bonnie, Michael, Justin, Moises, Elizabeth, Donald and Craig, all ministers, priests, deacons, ministry teams, those in formation; and our brothers and sisters worshipping at Mother of the Savior, Dearborn, and St Andrew's, Waterford. May your power at work within us may accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine. May we know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, **so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

Silence is kept.

Let our leaders and all in authority bow their knees before the Holy One, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name, that they may use their power justly, feed the hungry and share your abundance with all your children. May we know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, **so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

Silence is kept.

In every place of hunger, bring food, O God, in every place of poverty, bring abundance; in every place of terror, bring comfort and security. Receive gifts from our children and from the poor in our community, and from their generosity create that plenty which will satisfy the true needs of every person. May we know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, **so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

Silence is kept.

Come to us in our stormy darkness and comfort us in our fears; with your generous touch, heal those for whom we pray [especially _____].

Hear our thankfulness for the abundance of your grace [especially for _____].

You gather up the lives of all your children; receive into your fullness those who have died [especially _____].

Silence is kept.

Officiant: Your people look to you for nurture and healing, O Father: Fill our hungry lives with the abundance of your Spirit, that we may be fruitful disciples of the one whose compassion reaches across all boundaries, our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin

All kneel as they are able.

A Minister then says

Let us confess our sins to God.

A period of silence is observed.

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 the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

The Peace

All stand as they are able.

<i>Officiant</i>	The peace of the Lord be always with you.
<i>People</i>	And also with you.

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

Announcements

Holy Communion

Officiant

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good your vows to the Most High.

Psalms 50:14

The People then are seated.

How the Holy Communion is prepared

The Officiant, other Eucharistic Ministers, and any participating Acolytes must use hand sanitizer, before celebrating and before distribution. Gloves will not be used.

All of the elements for Holy Communion will be placed on the Altar for the Eucharistic Prayer. The Officiant alone stands at the altar, with others 6 feet or more away.

The **priest's wafer and chalice** will be uncovered in front of the Officiant during the Eucharistic Prayer. They **are for the Officiant alone**. They are consumed entirely by the Officiant, or appropriately disposed of after the service. The priest's wafer and the people's wafers will be kept separate at all times. The **people's wafers will be a container** on the Altar, which will remain covered throughout the Eucharistic Prayer. During consecration, the Officiant will touch the container, not the wafers. The **distribution** of consecrated wine is not permitted at this time (as of June 14, 2021 Diocese of Michigan directive).

How the Holy Communion will be distributed

Everyone distributing communion will use hand sanitizer before they begin distribution. Gloves will not be used.

Communicants will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer before receiving. Hand sanitizer will be available at the service.

The bread will be distributed by a minister to the people where they are standing, while maintaining six feet of distance between households. (If this service is indoors, the people will come to the Altar rail in household groups one at a time.)

The Minister will place the bread in the hand. The distribution will happen without directly touching the hand of the person receiving. Hand-to-mouth distribution is not permitted. If hand-to-hand contact happens, the minister will re-sanitize.

If a blessing is preferred, the blessing will be given without touch.

The people stand as they are able as a minister brings forward the alms basin.

Offertory Hymn

Doxology

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

The people remain standing as they are able.

Great Thanksgiving

<i>Officiant</i>	The Lord be with you.
<i>People</i>	And also with you.
<i>Officiant</i>	Lift up your hearts.
<i>People</i>	We lift them to the Lord.
<i>Officiant</i>	Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
<i>People</i>	It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The Officiant proceeds

We bow our knees before you, Father, from whom every family
in heaven and on earth takes its name.
We thank and praise you, for in Christ you had compassion on our scarcity
and turned it into your abundance.

You call us to bring to you the needs and fruits of your people and your world.
You commission us as your Son's disciples
to distribute the blessings of his grace and the benefits of his passion.

He took our human nature in order to bless it in his incarnation and ministry;
he was broken on the cross in order that your everlasting life
might be shared through resurrection.

And so we gladly render to you the praise of your everlasting glory, joining the company of
heaven in singing

Sanctus



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly

5
God of po - wer and might. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly

9
God of po - wer and might. Hea - ven and earth are

12
full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est! All

15
hea - ven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na, ho -

18
san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est!

24 *molto rit.*
Bles-sed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.

The Officiant continues

Revealing God, in your Son you fed the multitudes
and so showed your power to turn the water of our existence
into the wine of eternal life with you.

Strengthen your people through your Holy Spirit +
that they might be rooted and grounded in love.

As your Son held the loaves and through them made his glory known,
send down your Holy Spirit on this bread and this wine,
that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ Jesus our Lord;

who, at supper with his disciples, took bread,
gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying,

"Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup.
Again he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

"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.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

The Officiant continues

Glorious God, in Christ you disclose the breadth and length
and height and depth of a love that surpasses knowledge.
You come toward us across the rough sea of our anxiety
and in the nighttime of our fear, and counsel us to be not afraid.

Walk alongside any who experience deep hunger and don't know where to turn;
bless those who have been deeply betrayed, and who live
with the consequences of another's ruthlessness or conspiring;
stretch out your hand to all who search for someone to trust.

To you, who by the power at work within us are able to accomplish abundantly more
than all we can ask or imagine, to you be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
to all generations, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, one God now and ever. **Amen.**

The Officiant 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 for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

A period of silence is kept.

The Officiant says

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

The Officiant says

God's holy gifts, for God's holy people.

The table of Christ's body and blood is now made ready.
It is the table of company with Jesus.
It is the table of sharing with the poor and lowly of the world,
with whom Jesus identified.

So come to this table, you who have much faith
or you who would like more;
you who have been here often,
and you who have not been here in a long time, or ever before.
Come. It is Christ who invites you to meet him here.

People **Amen. As the bread and wine we now eat are transformed, may we
be changed into the likeness of Christ; bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh,
loving and caring for the world.**

The Officiant continues

In union, O Lord, with your faithful people at every altar of your Church where the Holy Eucharist is now being celebrated, those who are not physically present here join us in offering you praise and thanksgiving. We remember your death, Lord Christ; we proclaim your resurrection; we await your coming in glory. And since they cannot receive you today in the Sacrament of your Body and Blood, we beseech you to come spiritually into their hearts. Cleanse and strengthen us all with your grace, Lord Jesus, and never let us be separated from you. May we live in you, and you in us, in this life and in the life to come. **Amen.**

All baptized persons are welcome to receive Holy Communion.

After Communion, the Officiant says

Let us pray.

**Almighty and everliving God,
we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food
of the most precious Body and Blood
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries
that we are living members of the Body of your Son,
and heirs of your eternal kingdom.
And now, Father, send us out
to do the work you have given us to do,
to love and serve you
as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.
To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.**

Blessing

A priest blesses the people, saying

Live without fear: your creator has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you with a power and a presence that is stronger than death. Go in peace to follow the good road, and may the blessing of God + Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, be with you always. **Amen**

Closing Hymn

Let us talents and tongues employ

MHSO 50

C F G Dm

1 Let us tal - ents and tongues em - ploy, reach - ing out with a
 2 Christ is a - ble to make us one, at the ta - ble he
 3 Je - sus calls us in, sends us out bear - ing fruit in a

C G C F G

shout of joy: bread is bro - ken, the wine is poured,
 set the tone, teach - ing peo - ple to live to bless,
 world of doubt, gives us love to tell, bread to share:

Refrain
 Dm C G7 C Am C7/G

Christ is spo - ken and seen and heard.
 love in word and in deed ex - press. Je - sus lives a - gain,
 God (Im - man - u - el) ev - ery - where!

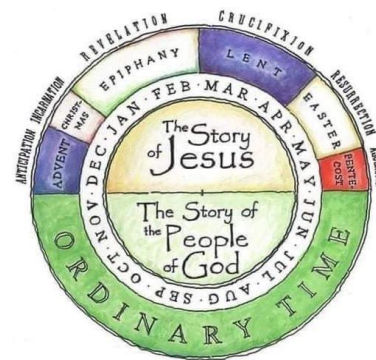
F Dm G C Dm7/F C

earth can breathe a - gain, pass the Word a - round: loaves a - bound!

Dismissal

Minister Let us go forth rejoicing in the power of the Spirit!
People **Thanks be to God!**

Postlude



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Upcoming Commemorations

- July 25 James the Apostle
26 The Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary;
and Charles Raymond Barnes, Priest & Martyr, 1938
27 William Reed Huntington, Priest, 1909
28 Johann Sebastian Bach, 1750, George Frederick Handel, 1759,
and Henry Purcell, 1695, Composers
29 Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany;
and, The First Ordination of Women to the Priesthood
in The Episcopal Church, 1974
30 William Wilberforce, Social Reformer, 1833
31 Ignatius of Loyola, Priest and Spiritual Writer, 1556

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OFFERING OUR DONATIONS OF FOOD AND FUNDS TO FAITH IN ACTION

Faith in Action is continuing to provide leadership in collecting donations to support households in need in the Chelsea and Dexter areas. They are in need of our continuing help. **The usual "TOP ITEMS" needed are:** baked beans, coffee, canned tomatoes, hamburger helper (or any helper), spaghetti sauce, small cans Campbell's soup, ketchup, ranch dressing, cereal, 64oz fruit juices, chips, crackers, toilet paper, laundry soap, cleaning products. 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 at the church** will be **TODAY**. Please leave your donations at the church on that day.

Financial donations to help us combat the continuing effects of the pandemic can be made by PayPal at www.faithinaction1.org, by [Facebook](#), or by mailing a check to *Faith in Action*, 603 S. Main Street, Chelsea MI 48118. **If you need help, please call FIA at (734) 475-3305**



BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

Pentecost 9 Proper 12B July 25, 2021

2 Samuel 11:1-15

Not only was David an inspired leader, but he was also the “Don Corleone” of his age. This king reveals his mafioso-like cunning – he carefully arranges the death of an unwitting rival while distancing himself from the terrible deed. It is most notable that the authors and editors of 2 Samuel preserved this unflattering story and included it in their compilation (the authors of Chronicles, an operatic presentation of the events recorded in Samuel, omit David’s wicked action). Popular piety through the ages has tried to soften David’s sins in this episode – blame has been shifted to Bathsheba (she seduced him), or the motive was actually David’s deep love for the woman. According to some ancient rabbis, the marriage of a Hittite – Uriah – to an Israelite woman was offensive to the Lord and David acted heroically to right this wrong! In reality, David was an adulterer and a murderer. We might see in him the blend of light and shadow that characterizes each of us. We are all vulnerable, vulnerable to the temptations of power, wealth, and sex, and no matter how holy, righteous, and confident in our goodness we might be, shadow lurks just below the surface, waiting for an opportunity. David had every gift but the most essential – self-knowledge.

- How does this story of David’s transgressions invite you to ponder your own shadow side and capacity for evil?

Psalms 14

Psalms 14 bears witness to a perennial truth – we all sometimes live as if there is no God. This way characterizes what the psalmist calls the “fool.” We also notice, however, a tension in these verses between the evildoers and “my people” (vv 1-3 and 4-6.) We might interpret this as the tension we all carry as we grapple with the reality that we are light and shadow. Each of us has the capacity to turn not only away from but *against* God in our actions, words, and choices. Yet we all know what it is to flee to God for refuge when we realize there is nowhere else to turn. These internal contradictions we carry are not a failing but rather the human condition. Our psalm invites us to deeper self-knowledge and awareness of our shadow.

We could also interpret this poem as lamenting inordinate human pride and the illusion of control. J Clinton McCann, in his New Interpreter’s Bible commentary on the Psalms, reflects, “What is truly shocking is that what Psalm 14 calls foolishness and what other psalms call wickedness, is essentially what our culture teaches people to be – autonomous, self-directed, self-sufficient...We don’t need other people and we don’t need God!” Who among us is unaffected to some extent by this mindset? No one, “no, not one...” (v3).

- How might Psalm 14 invite us to deeper self-knowledge and shadow work, individually and collectively?

Ephesians 3:14-21

The second-generation Christians who received these words faced extraordinary existential questions, for they witnessed their founding members – the apostles – and many of their brothers and sisters in

the church face torture, exile, and martyrdom. What's more, by the time this text was composed, the Jerusalem Temple had been destroyed – the one external symbol of God's presence and a visible connection to the faith of their ancestors. Now, the only people in their world who had holy gathering places were those who worshipped the emperor and gods of Rome; the Christians had no external supports. Therefore, the prayer that they be strengthened in their inner being through the power of the Spirit (v16) carried powerful resonance. The image of being rooted, as if in a nurturing garden of love, carries the symbolism of tapping inner strength in the fertile soil of Christ.

Finally, we note that the author begins this prayer with a sentiment that challenges us today as powerfully as it did our ancestors-in-faith 2000 years ago – God is the loving father of every “family” (the Greek *patria* can also be rendered “clan”). Theirs was an era similar to our own in its factions and polarization, yet the Ephesians are being called to reclaim and live in the reality that all belong to God.

- How are you being invited to nurture and become more deeply rooted in your “inner being with power through [the] Spirit”?

John 6:1-21

I've often heard preachers try to explain this Gospel by saying that Jesus convinced the people to share their food with each other. Their open-heartedness and mutuality were the true miracles. This is a fine lesson, but there is something deeper here – the power of the “Bread of Life” in the face of overwhelmingly hopeless circumstances. Let's briefly explore what this text might teach us about Christian hope, as well as the notion of testing (v6) and finally the move to make Jesus king (v15).

We note that John evokes the memory of the Exodus by setting this story in the wilderness near the time of the Passover festival. Those sacred events from Israel's past were also apparently hopeless situations overcome by the creative, surprising power of God. Ronald Rolheiser observes, “What do we need to understand about the loaves? We need to understand that we are with the bread of life, everything we need to feed the world we already have...We have the resources already; though on the surface those resources will always look over-matched, hopeless, dwarfed, nonsensical, wishful thinking. On the surface, invariably, we will look...not up to the task of ...feeding a hungry, greedy world.” *Hope* is trust that God, with our cooperation, will find a way.

John records that Jesus questioned Philip to “test” him (Greek *peirazon*). This word is also used in Matthew 4 (the “Temptation” narrative). Does God test us? Many well-meaning people attribute hardship in their lives to the testing of God (or the devil). I think they're trying to say that God is present with them when it's difficult. But the notion that God “tests” us is discomfiting. Adults don't do that to each other – we call that “mind games.” When the Bible talks about testing, we might interpret that as saying that life sends us challenges and God watches how we respond. This is what Jesus was doing with Philip.

Finally, notice how Jesus runs from the move to make him king. This desire to “crown” Jesus is the reaction of people who are “amazed” (never a positive thing in the Gospels!). Jesus realizes this is a gut response from an overwrought people. It's not from discernment, from maturity, from the soul. Jesus models for us how the spiritually conscious leader responds to and redirects the overwrought energies of excitable people.

- Where in your life are you being called to exercise the kind of “hope” discussed above?

This study was written by Brian B. Pinter.

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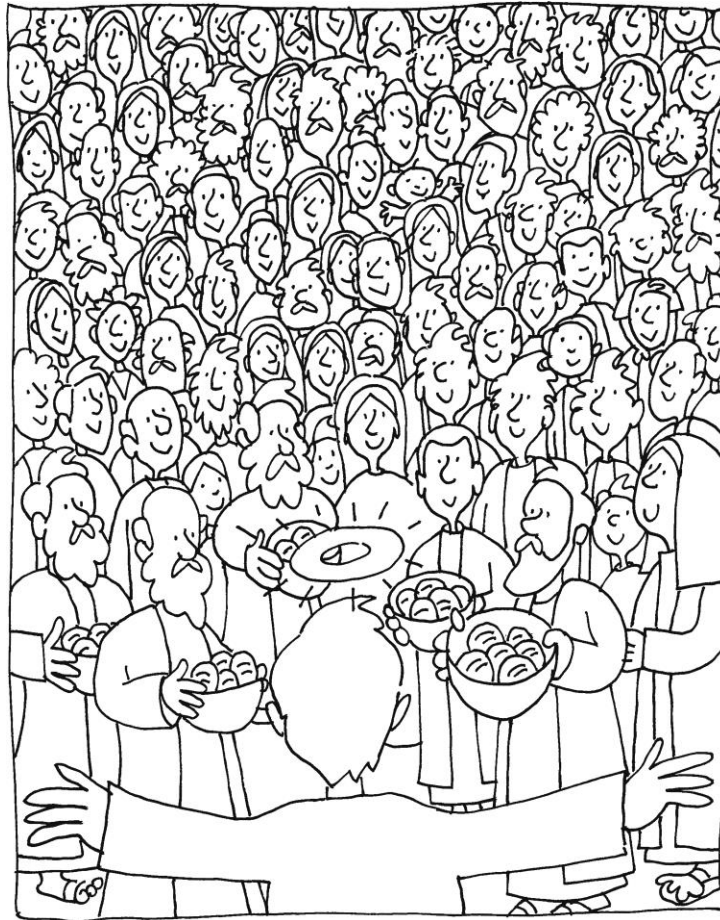
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We seek to grow as diverse disciples of Jesus Christ,
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