

Sunday, June 19, 2022 – Second Sunday after Pentecost

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Introduction

This Sunday's texts paint startling pictures of the horrific nature of sin. The church's repeated celebration of holy communion counters that tragic reality in a continued showing forth of the death of Jesus until he comes again. It is a dramatic declaration of "how much God has done for you."

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, we bring before you the cries of a sorrowing world. In your mercy set us free from the chains that bind us, and defend us from everything that is evil, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: 1 Kings 19:1-4 [5-7] 8-15a

Elijah has defeated the prophets of Baal through the power of God. Now, fleeing from Queen Jezebel, Elijah comes to Mount Horeb (another name for Sinai). God appears to him there not in power but in "the sound of sheer silence" and reassures him that he is not alone.

¹Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ²Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." ³Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

⁴But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." [⁵Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." ⁶He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. ⁷The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you."] ⁸He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. ⁹At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

¹¹He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to

pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; ¹²and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁴He answered, “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.” ^{15a}Then the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.”

Psalm 42--43

¹As the deer longs | for the water-brooks,
so longs my soul for | you, O God.

²**I thirst for God, for the | living God;
when shall I come to appear before the pres- | ence of God?**

³My tears have been my food | day and night,
while all day long they say to me, “Where now | is your God?”

⁴**I pour out my soul when I think | on these things;
how I went with the multitude and led them into the house of God, with shouts of
thanksgiving, among those | keeping festival.**

⁵Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul, and why are you so disquiet- | ed within me?
Put your trust in God, for I will yet give thanks to the one who is my help | and my God.

⁶**My soul is heav- | y within me;
therefore I will remember you from the land of Jordan, and from the peak of Mizar
among the | heights of Hermon.**

⁷One deep calls to another in the roar of | your cascades;
all your rapids and floods have gone | over me.

⁸**The LORD grants lovingkindness | in the daytime;
in the night season the LORD’s song is with me, a prayer to the God | of my life.**

⁹I will say to the God of my strength, “Why have you re- | jected me,
and why do I wander in such gloom while the enemy op- | presses me?”

¹⁰**While my bones are being broken, my enemies mock me | to my face;
all day long they mock me and say to me, “Where now | is your God?”**

¹¹Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul, and why are you so disquiet- | ed within me?

Put your trust in God, for I will yet give thanks to the one who is my help | and my God.

^{43: 1}**Give judgment for me, O God, and defend my cause against an un- | godly people;**

deliver me from the deceitful | and the wicked.

²For you are the God of my strength; why have you re- | jected me, and why do I wander in such gloom while the enemy op- | presses me?

³**Send out your light and your truth, that | they may lead me, and bring me to your holy hill and to your | sanctuary;**

⁴that I may go to the altar of God, to the God of my | joy and gladness; and on the harp I will give thanks to you, O | God my God.

⁵**Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul, and why are you so disquiet- | ed within me?**

Put your trust in God, for I will yet give thanks to the one who is my help | and my God.

Second Reading: Galatians 3:23-29

For Paul, baptism is a powerful bond that unites people not only with God but with other believers. Those who call themselves children of God experience a transformation that removes prejudices of race, social class, or gender in favor of true unity in Christ.

²³Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. ²⁴Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, ²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Gospel: Luke 8:26-39

Jesus' mission includes foreigners and his authority extends to the casting out of demons. Some who witness Jesus' work are seized with confusion and fear, but the man who was healed is commissioned to give testimony to God's mercy and power.

²⁶Then [Jesus and his disciples] arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"—²⁹for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) ³⁰Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. ³¹They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

³²Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. ³⁷Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. ³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹"Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

Prayers of Intercession

United in Christ and guided by the Spirit, we pray for the church, the creation, and all in need, saying “God of grace” and responding, “hear our prayer.”

A brief silence.

Holy God, you hear the cries of those who seek you. Equip your church with evangelists who reveal the continuous call of your outstretched hands and your promises of a home in you. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You hear the cries of the earth. Restore places where land, air, and waterways have been harmed. Guide us to develop and implement sources of energy and food production that do not destroy the earth. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You hear the cries of those who are marginalized or cast out. On this Juneteenth observance, guide us continually toward the end of oppression in all its forms, especially white supremacy. Bring true freedom and human flourishing to all your beloved children. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You hear the cries of those who suffer. Come to the aid of all who are homeless, naked, hungry, and sick (*especially*). Bring peace to any experiencing mental illness, that they can clearly recognize your loving presence. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You hear the cries of those who celebrate and those who grieve on this Father’s Day. Nurture mutual love and tender care in all relationships. Comfort those for whom this day brings sadness or longing. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for the faithful departed whose lives proclaimed all you had done for them. At the last, unite us with them as we make our home in you. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God of every time and place, in Jesus’ name and filled with your Holy Spirit, we entrust these spoken prayers and those in our hearts into your holy keeping.

Amen.

A reflection for this Second Sunday after Pentecost...

Proclaiming How Much Jesus Has Done

We feel powerless when life's storms rage about us. Despite our best efforts, we cannot navigate those dangers without the hand of God to guide and free us.

In the gospel, the man with demons was unable to help himself. His affliction had caused him to be chained and shackled by his community. Yet even that could not control the raging evil within him. He remained helpless and ostracized on his own until he was emancipated by the power of God in Christ. Even though he was an outsider from the land of the Geresenes, Jesus came to his aid. He cast out the legion of demons in the man and sent them into the nearby herd of pigs, who then flung themselves off the bank. Though that dramatic event caused fear and confusion, the man was at last set free and commissioned by Jesus as a witness to his stunning liberation.

Paul reflects on the human condition of being "imprisoned" and "guarded" and the necessity of Christ to restore us. He reminds us of the power of our baptism to free and unite us. The text goes on to make the radically inclusive statement that there is no longer "Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Together, these texts recount the journey of faith from bondage to freedom, from separation to unity, from death to new life. And this is a path open to all, no matter who we are or from whence we've come. The scriptures energize us to join that man in the gospel who went out proclaiming "how much Jesus had done for him," even to those who would rather not hear it.

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