

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B August 23, 2015

The Lectionary offers a choice, a different perspective and a helpful tool for our lives this week. The choice is to decide whether we will remain faithful in following Christ or not. The perspective is to recognise that, as we resist evil, it's not people we are dealing with but the evil in our own hearts, and in the institutions, systems and structures of the world. And the tool which makes it possible for us to navigate all of this is prayer.

May our worship lead us into right choices, Christlike perspectives and passionate prayer.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

1 Kings 8 [1-6, 10-11], 22-30, 41-43

King David had planned the Temple in Jerusalem, and King Solomon completed the building. Now, with great and joyful ceremony, it is dedicated to the worship of God.

or **Joshua 24 : 1-2a, 14-18**

This reading and the Gospel are about the one great choice we must make - to serve God or not. Joshua's final appeal to the people is to convince them to serve the Lord their God.

Ephesians 6 : 10-20

These familiar words bring this letter to a close. We need to use all the armour God provides in the Christian fight against so much that is evil.

John 6 : 56-69

Jesus had been speaking of himself as the bread from heaven, of his body and blood for our eternal life. The spiritual truth of this teaching is baffling to man and offensive to some, but Peter voices the disciples' choice to continue with Jesus and accept what he gives.

TEXT OF READINGS

http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp16_RCL.html

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty and everlasting God,
who art always more ready to hear than we to pray,
and art wont to give more than either we desire, or deserve;
Pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy;
forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid,
and giving us those good things
which we are not worthy to ask,
but through the merits and mediation
of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty and everlasting God,
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray

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and to give more than either we desire, or deserve:
Pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid,
and giving us those good things
which we are not worthy to ask
save through the merits and mediation
of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Eternal Son of God, you satisfy the hungry heart. You turn weakness into strength. Where sin abounds, your pardon is greater. Beyond our sorrow lies your comfort. Wherever we go in life's travels, we meet you there. Our suffering finds its measure by your own cross and death. Together we say, "We bless your Holy Name", and respond, "Receive our praise."

Gracious Saviour, who suffers our witless ways, let your church catholic find its one Table of Thanksgiving. Let all our betrayals be buried and discord cease so that together we may say: We bless your Holy Name. **Receive our praise.**

Lord of holiness, we hold before you the law makers and law enforcers of our land: police forces, lawyers, magistrates and judges. We ask that their service be characterised by righteousness and truth, and that all corruption be put away, so that we may have reason to say: We bless your Holy Name. **Receive our praise.**

Lord of healing, enter the homes torn by ill-will, strife, jealousy, envy, verbal and physical abuse. By your grace, halt unthinking and unloving behaviour between spouses and between parents and children. By your Holy Spirit let love return and peace be restored so that the homes of our church and community may declare truly: We bless your Holy Name. **Receive our praise.**

Lord of love, grant that the children and the young of the church may be taught the Word of God faithfully in the homes and schools of our congregation so that all may say: We bless your Holy Name. **Receive our praise.**

Lord of daily bread, enable us to see and cherish the abundance that is around us in true friends and good neighbours. May we never discard carelessly the food on our tables. Rather, increase our thankfulness and help us to say: We bless your Holy Name. **Receive our praise.**

Eternal Son of God, the change of seasons calls us to celebrate you as Lord of all times. Take our lives and keep them.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

As we proclaim the gospel of faith, let us pray in the Spirit for the desperate needs of all peoples.

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Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering, for the people of God in every place, and for all who seek the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For mercy, justice, and peace among all peoples.

Lord, have mercy.

For students and teachers, and all those returning to their studies.

Lord, have mercy.

For abundant fruits of the earth, and for safety from violent storms.

Lord, have mercy.

For the sick and the suffering, travellers and those on vacation, prisoners, captives, and their families, and all those in danger and need.

Lord, have mercy.

For our city and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with ----- and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Blessed are you, God of Israel, whose words are spirit and life. Hear the prayers we offer this day and feed us with the bread of heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE **3**

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. *Brief Silence.*

P For the Church, the Bride of the Lamb, that Christ's people be delivered from thoughtless worship, and that as we praise Him with our lips so we may also honor Him in our hearts, let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For all Servants of the Word, that they would take care not to mingle with the Word of God their own opinions or ideas, but faithfully hand onto the next generation the faith once delivered to the saints, let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

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P For God's institution of marriage, that He would defend it from those who would subvert it and strengthen all husbands and wives in their marriages, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P For the leaders of our nation, that they be given grace to serve with wisdom, courage, and integrity, according to God's good will, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all who are ill or in need, the lonely and the dejected, the poor and the imprisoned, those who are dying and those who serve them [*especially _____*], that our loving Father would comfort them with His presence and grant a happy release from their hardships, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all who partake this day of Christ's holy body and blood, that in their eating and drinking they may receive the benefits of forgiveness of sins, the renewal of life, and a foretaste of the feast to come, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P For the company of saints glorified with Christ in heaven, let us offer our grateful praise, begging the Lord of the Church to gather us home with them into the Kingdom of our Father, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

POST COMMUNION

God of compassion,
in this eucharist we know again your forgiveness
and the healing power of your love.
Grant that we who are made whole in Christ
may bring that forgiveness and healing to this broken world,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Holy Wisdom,
you granted Solomon's request
for an understanding mind
and the knowledge to discern good from evil.
Fill us with such understanding and knowledge
that we may act as instruments
of your loving desire for creation,
working with you to transform
our conceit into concern for others,
our fear into love,

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our violence into peace,
and our brokenness into wholeness. Amen.
Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbours as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.
Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.
Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.
Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit
through loving your creation
and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion
and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.
Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards
of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.
We offer these prayers of love
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbours,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.
Loving God,

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open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.
Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,
hear our prayers
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings
with your unending compassion.
Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Gracious God,
although we once were strangers,
you receive us as friends
and draw us home to you.
Set your living bread before us
that, feasting around your table,
we may be strengthened to continue the work
to which your Son commissioned us. Amen.

Source of life,
you feed us with the spiritual milk of your love
and deliver us from darkness to light.
Encompass us in the circle of your protection,
that, secure in your sustaining power,
we may find the wisdom and strength
to challenge the evils of our time. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

This week is all about choices. On the one hand there is the choice to abandon our devotion to God and God's ways. In the Gospel, many of Jesus' followers find his call to be completely united with him – to believe that he is the source of life and to take him into

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their beings (eating his flesh and drinking his blood) – too much to handle and they abandon Jesus. But, his disciples, although they may be feeling like they want to go, recognise that life is found in Christ and so remain faithful. In the Old Testament related reading, Joshua calls the people to choose where they will put their devotion, while making his own commitment to God clear and public. In a similar way, Psalm 34 describes the differences between those who stay faithful to God and those who are "wicked".

Linked with our choice to follow Jesus there is a call to prayer in this week's Lectionary. In the famous passage from Ephesians, while Paul calls the believers to prepare themselves for the attacks of evil by putting on God's armour (making a choice to stay faithful) he also calls them to prayer for themselves and for him as he seeks to spread the Gospel. And in the Old Testament semi-continuous reading, Solomon prays and pleads with God to hear and answer the prayers of all who pray toward the Temple. The theme this week is simple and clear: everyday we will be faced with the choice to remain faithful to Christ or to turn away, and we will need the intimacy with God that comes through prayer and through sharing in the life of Christ to remain true to our calling. In a world where religion is being questioned and falling out of fashion, and in which many parts of the Church are in decline, this choice, and the call to prayer, are as important as ever.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: As we listen for what God may be saying to us this week in terms of the global issues of our time, the readings draw our attention to three important calls. The first is to remember that we always face the choice to remain faithful to God or to abandon God's ways. We can work for justice in God's name, but fall to the temptation to adopt the strategies of evil, believing that the end justifies the means, or we can stay committed to the ways of integrity, transparency and ethical operations. We can continue to trust in and strive for the ideal of God's Reign, or we can choose expediency and embrace whatever compromises get the job done, at least in part. The call to stay faithful speaks strongly through the readings this week. The second call is to recognise that whatever opposes God's Reign of justice, peace, compassion and love, it is not human beings. Rather it is the evil in human hearts, and in human structures, institutions and systems that opposes God's Reign. As such, we are called to resist the evil, while still maintaining an attitude of grace and compassion toward the people we must confront or who oppose what we do. Finally, there is the call to make prayer a significant part of our strategy as we work to manifest God's Reign in our world. Ultimately, we need prayer for its ability to empower us, and for the way it changes us to conform more and more to the ideals of God's Reign for which we strive. Choosing God's ways, resisting evil while refusing to demonise any person, and prayer – these are the tools by which we can contribute to the healing of our world, if we are willing to use them.

LOCAL APPLICATION: One of the big struggles we face in the Church today is the tendency to demonise one another, and those of other creeds or belief systems. By doing this we justify our judgment of them, and free ourselves from the guilt of failing to love as Jesus did. But, this is not the way of the Gospel, and it is, rather, a choice to abandon the life of Christ in favour of our own self-interest. It's a choice we deal with between denominations and religions, within church communities, and even in our own homes. Yet, if we take seriously the call to stay faithful to Christ, then we cannot avoid "eating his flesh and drinking his blood" – taking the life, the values, the mission, the purposes, the attitudes, and the priorities of Jesus into our hearts and souls and living completely from the choice to follow Jesus. This means that we never have an excuse to stop loving, and we are never allowed to justify our condemnation of another person. It also means that when we resist evil, we always have to look beyond individuals and persons to the institutions, systems and ideologies that oppose God's Reign. Only then can we love our

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enemy, while fighting for justice. In our neighbourhoods, communities and homes, we need this "Jesus perspective" if we are ever going to find ways to overcome our partisanship and work together for the good of all. And to get this "Jesus perspective" requires a life of deep, transforming prayer which goes beyond just asking God for things, and becomes about immersing ourselves in the life and mission of God. This is the stuff of our daily Christian living – praying, choosing daily to stay true to the love and grace of Jesus, and working to heal whatever evil we encounter within and outside of us, without rejecting other people in the process. May God help us as we seek to rise to this challenge.

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

1 Kings 8:(1, 6, 10-11) 22-30, 41-43

- :11 "so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD." - Great imagery. Sometimes I think we feel something similar as pastors - so overwhelmed by God or underwhelmed by ourselves that we find it hard to be pastors.
- This passage makes me think about public leaders and expressions of faith - in a non church-state society, what kinds of expressions of faith of public leaders are authentic?
- :27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built!" - Solomon, despite his power and position, still seems to have a good sense about God. We so often want to box God in. Solomon builds a dwelling for God with a proper amount of hesitation.
- foreigners - In the midst of the current conversations about immigration and border control, the biblical witness on treatment of foreigners is pretty clear. Here, Solomon talks about foreigners and residents united by faith.

Psalm 84:

- "dwelling place" - again, a focus on where God 'lives' or stays. What do you think of as God's dwelling place? Everywhere, sure, but what actual place do you go to and most feel God's presence?
- "happy are those" - this pattern of blessing is the same as the beatitudes that Jesus speaks in the gospels.
- "strength to strength" - like "glory to glory" in 2 Corinthians 13 - God can take what we think we have and transform it into a better version.
- "a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere" - great imagery.

Ephesians 6:10-20:

- again, like the psalm, *strength* is a key word in this passage. What is your strength? How are you strong in God?
- Paul, whether intentionally or not, subverts all these war images (which make me a bit uncomfortable) and turns them into non-violent images so effectively, much like Isaiah's "beating swords into plowshares," only in a more subtle way.
- compare to Colossians 3:12 - more 'clothing' imagery.

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- "make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" - what mixed images - we dare to be bold about something that is still shrouded in mystery. That's how God moves in our lives!

John 6:56-69:

- This text continues with the last week of a month-long series of texts from John 6 that all talk about Jesus and bread and feeding and bread of life and living water, etc., etc.
- *abide*, remember, means literally to "stay at home" or "remain at home" - an image of being at home, comfortable in God, and vice versa.
- "eats me" - the Greek here is *tro^go^*, literally "to gnaw", or "to munch" more like an animal would eat than a human.
- "does this offend you?" - A word with mixed meanings. To be offensive can mean being proactive and playing a good game, but it can also mean hurting someone's sensibilities or worse. We usually work hard not to offend. When is offending worth it, necessary, helpful?
- "do you also wish to go away?" Jesus sounds sad, and for once, worried/anxious that his disciples won't stick with him.
- "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life." Peter responds, for once, on target and with such comfort.

By Beth Quick

SERMON OUTLINE

John 6:56-69 Those who eat my flesh.....

Jesus had come to the town of Capernaum – just after miraculously walking on the Sea of Galilee...

1. Coming to Christ - Jesus was now teaching in the synagogue... Earlier he had referred to himself as the *Bread of life* v35 – *he who comes to me will never go hungry & he who believes in me will never be thirsty....*

Now the crowds were flocking to him – 6.2

2. Communing with Christ 56-59: Jesus develops his teaching on the theme of feeding their hearts, minds & souls – espec with reference to Holy Communion... v56 *Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, & I in them - the one who eats this bread v58 will live for ever.* Ct their ancestors for whom God provided manna in the wilderness – but *they died*. To the Jew it was abhorrent to drink blood – Deut 16.23 – *the blood is life* – so still today all carcasses have to be drained of blood before cooking & eating – *kosher...* It was a totally new concept for the Eastern mind – yet this is what Jesus promoted when he instituted the Lord's Supper - & we still carry on his teaching today in HC...

3. Committing to Christ 60-69: there were *many of his disciples = followers* who found this teaching hard to take - *'This teaching is difficult who can accept it?'* - & sadly v66 *Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him* - still a problem in the modern world – will we be faithful? Jesus then challenges the 12: *'Do you also wish to go away?'* 67 To which ⁶⁸*Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe & know that you are the Holy One of God.'* May we in faith & trust make a similar confession of personal faith as we come to Him who has *the words of eternal life...*

By Norman Porteous

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ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"Words of Eternal Life," the Rev. Dr. David Lose, *Day 1*
http://day1.org/1405-words_of_eternal_life

"To Whom Shall We Go?" Dianne Bergant, CSA, *America*
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3123

"The Two Battles," Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations
<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-two-battles>

"Eating Jesus," the Rev. Martin Copenhaver, *Day 1*
http://day1.org/4043-eating_jesus

"The Bread of Life," the Rev. Dr. Joseph S. Pagano, Sermons that Work
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2012/07/23/12-pentecost-proper-1-b-august-19-2012/>

"Crunch Time," John R. Donahue, SJ, *America*
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2116

CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children, Proper 16B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/year-b-proper-16-21st-sunday-in.html>

"Sermon of the Week," / "Mensajes para niños," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

"Ready to Play," "Symbols of Faithfulness," Children's Time, in Sermons and Liturgies. Richard J. Fairchild. (Scroll down in liturgies to find Children's Time.)
<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/b-or21sn.php>

"Junk Food Christians," Children's Sermon from Sermons4kids.com.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/junkfood.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Jesus Calls Us O'er The Tumult
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
O Worship The King
God Is Our Strength And Refuge
O God Our Help In Ages Past
The Lord Reigns
You Are
Mighty To Save (Link to YouTube video)
You Are Good And Forgiving
When Our Songs (Have Mercy)