

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B AUGUST 30, 2015

It's all about passion this week! The Lectionary explores what it means to obey God's law and to live a righteous life, and concludes that, if our faith is simply legalistic, outward observance, it is not authentic. Rather, it is about ensuring that our hearts are devoted to God, that we remain passionate in our commitment to Christ and to God's Reign.

May our worship be passionate this week, and may it lead us into passionate service of God and of others.

INTRODUCTIONS

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

Song of Solomon 2 : 8-13

We begin now some readings from what we call the 'Wisdom literature' of Israel. This is from one of the Bible's rarest books, a collection of love songs sometimes attributed to Solomon, whose life we have briefly heard about in recent weeks. Although the poetry is never obviously religious, it can speak to us of the God who comes to us and in love draws us to himself.

or Deuteronomy 4 : 1-2, 6-9

The injunction from Moses to the Israelites was to obey every detailed commandment in God's Law. This would be good for them, and a good witness to other nations. But Jesus, we shall hear, had a rather different approach to the minutiae of legal systems.

Psalms 45:1-2, 6-9:

A Psalm in celebration of God's appointed king as handsome in appearance, but also as just and righteous. The context is the wedding of the king, and thus the beauty and sacredness of this human union is also celebrated.

OR Psalm 15:

The ones who are able to dwell in God's presence are those who live blameless lives, speaking truth, refusing to harm or insult others, keeping promises, lending without interest and refusing bribes. Such people do not stumble.

James 1 : 17-27

We shall hear passages from this letter for several consecutive weeks. It is a kind of manual for Christian conduct. This section exhorts us to behaviour worthy of the truths we have received.

Mark 7 : 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

After a few Sundays listening to St. John, we resume our reading of St. Mark at a point where religious leaders begin to be troubled by what they hear of Jesus. The question they pose seems trivial. But to the Pharisee every detail in the Law was necessary for righteousness.

TEXT OF READINGS

http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp17_RCL.html

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B AUGUST 30, 2015

Almighty and merciful God,
of whose only gift it cometh
that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service;
Grant, we beseech thee,
that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life,
that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises;
through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty God,
who called your Church to bear witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
Help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Presider or deacon

Honouring God with our hearts as with our lips, let us offer prayers for all those in danger and need.

Deacon or other leader

For *N* our bishop and *N* our rector, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For mercy, peace, and justice among all peoples.

Lord, have mercy.

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

Lord, have mercy.

For workers and their organizations, and for those who employ and manage them.

Lord, have mercy.

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

Lord, have mercy.

For the sick and the suffering, orphans and widows, prisoners, captives, and their families, and all those in distress.

Lord, have mercy.

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B AUGUST 30, 2015

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

Father of lights, in whom there is no variation or shadow, hear the prayers we offer this day and inspire us to be doers of the word; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

2

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 spread of Christ's Kingdom, that many may be brought to know our Lord in saving faith, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all pastors and servants of the Church, that taking up the sword of the Spirit and faithfulness in prayer, they would teach the faith with joy, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P For this parish, that by the Holy Spirit's power we might put to death the sinful impulses that arise from our hearts and live from Christ's pure heart of love, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all those who make, administer, and judge our laws, together with all who serve in our armed forces, that God protect them from evil and strengthen them in every good, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all those who teach and all those who learn in our schools and universities, that the Lord would bless this coming school year with the gifts of knowledge and truth, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who pass through difficult times, especially those burdened with the cross of illness, poverty, or loneliness, that Christ would look in mercy on each hurting individual and bring them comfort, hope, and everlasting life, let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all who gather at the Lord's Table this day, that they would receive Christ's body and blood to their spiritual benefit, and that the Lord's forgiveness given through this

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B AUGUST 30, 2015

Sacrament would overflow into their relationships with others, let us pray to the Lord,

C Lord, have mercy.

P For the faithful departed, whose bodies sleep in the earth and yet whose souls continue praising God in heaven, let us give thankful praises and ask that Christ would grant us also one day to share in His victory over sin, death and the grave, 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 our creator,
you feed your children with the true manna,
the living bread from heaven.
Let this holy food sustain us through our earthly pilgrimage
until we come to that place
where hunger and thirst are no more;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

O God, Wisdom of the universe,
you bear the pain of your people.
Grant us the gift of wisdom,
that we may discern your way
and live justly and graciously
amid the struggles of this world. 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.

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B AUGUST 30, 2015

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 neighbors. 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,
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

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B AUGUST 30, 2015

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.

Blessed are you, O Lord and Lover,
source of beauty and depth of passion.
Strengthen and inspire us to do the word we hear
and live the faith we confess. Amen.

O Father of lights,
from whose word of truth
we have been born as firstfruits of your creatures:
make us quick to listen and slow to speak,
that the word implanted in us
may take root to nourish all our living,
and that we may be blessed in our doing and fruitful in action. Amen.

Through your lovely Christ, we come to you, most loving God.

We come to worship you in the holiness of your beauty which we glimpse in the majesty of the stars above us and the glories of earth around us.

We praise you for the unique embodiment of your holy beauty in Jesus Christ, who did not only speak of your loveliness but lived it to the fullest degree.

We delight in you, we worship you, we glorify you with our loftiest songs and our deepest prayers.

In the name of your beloved Son.

Amen!

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Song of Solomon 2:8-13

- Song of Solomon only makes it into the lectionary cycle twice, and it is this passage both times. I guess we're not comfortable with reading scriptures in church that are full of praise for the physical features of one's lover!
- Still, this passage is beautiful. In [college](#), we sang an arrangement of the text called *Rose of Sharon*.
- This passage is a rare example of scripture written from the point of view of a woman, even if the author was not actually a woman. This text is written in the first person, female.
- With sex portrayed any and every where, texts like this are rare and romantic and loving. Perhaps we should set an example for loving relationships by reading from Song of Solomon more often?

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B AUGUST 30, 2015

Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9:

- [Chris Haslam says](#) that this psalm is written by "a court scribe, a skilled writer ("a ready scribe") [who] feels inspired to write an ode for a royal wedding."
- The psalmist compares God's kingly qualities with the King of the land's qualities. Who's qualities remind you of God's nature?
- Who would you write a psalm/ode to, and why?

James 1:17-27:

- :17 - Well said - not only are gifts from God, but also "every generous act of giving." Giving, receiving, gifts - all from God.
- "welcome with meekness the implanted word" - meekness is not often considered a virtue or asset these days. How do you receive God's word meekly?
- "be doers of the word, and not merely hearers" - this is James' theme throughout. Don't just hear, do. Don't just use words, act. Not just right belief, but also right action. Rather than saying James advocates for a salvation by works, I think James says our deepest faith is expressed in our way of living (what we do!) - How do you 'do' the word? For James, it is only in 'doing' that we really 'get' what we're believing.
- "unstained by the world" - what imagery! How can we be seek to be unstained by the world without having a "don't want to get our hands dirty" attitude? A fine line to walk.

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23:

- Traditions can bless and enrich us, but they can also bind and trap us. Again, a fine line. What traditions are important to you - which would upset you to have broken? Why?
- "You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition." Ah, how true. How often have our traditions only served to lead us away from what Jesus would have us do!
- It isn't what goes in but what comes out of a person that defiles. Do you believe that? Sometimes, I think what goes in, even if it doesn't defile, can tempt or harm. But I think in this scenario, Jesus has a different point to make. It isn't the outsides but the insides that make us who we are.

By Beth Quick.

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

We're back in Mark's Gospel and the Gospel-centred readings for this week all challenge us to live righteously and justly by following God's law, living with humility and integrity and ensuring that we don't focus on outward observance, but allow our hearts to be changed so that our service of God and others is a true, heartfelt response. In Deuteronomy, the people are called to value and listen to God's laws, treasuring them as the source of wisdom. In Psalm 15, those who live blameless lives are able to enter God's house and are assured that they shall not stumble. In James, those who hear the law but fail to live it out are compared to people who look at themselves in a mirror and then forget what they look like, but followers of Christ are called to put God's law into practice. Finally, Jesus

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B AUGUST 30, 2015

demonstrates that following the law is not about legalistic, outward observance, but is about being changed by the values and practices of God's Reign so that our hearts are pure and connected with God.

In the semi-continuous Old Testament readings, we find a celebration of human sexuality and love. In the Song of Solomon, the lovers enjoy the beauty of Spring, which, for the young woman, is not unlike the beauty of her lover. In a similar way, Psalm 45 celebrates the king on his wedding day. It may seem like these readings are about as far from the others as it is possible to get, but two approaches bring all the readings together. In the traditional view, both of these readings can be interpreted allegorically, representing our intimate union with God, and calling us to live as true lovers of God – which is exactly what all of the other readings are saying as well. But, another approach is to recognise that our sexuality is not divorced from our spirituality, but is an integral part of it. From this perspective, the joy in our physicality, and the beauty and sacredness of our sexuality must be included in our quest to live godly lives. The Scriptures speak of this when they call us away from immorality, and when they challenge us to live as those whose hearts are pure, not just our outward actions. In a sense, part of the call to be lovers of God and neighbour, is to embrace eros and allow it to move us to passion for justice, peace, unity, and compassion – especially for the least. Our faith is not just about what we do outwardly – it's about having hearts set ablaze by the values and purposes of God's Reign, such that we practice "true religion" which liberates and restores others – especially, as James says, the weakest and most vulnerable.

What might it mean for us to learn to celebrate our union with God as lovers do, and to follow Christ with passion as well as obedience, noticing and enjoying life (like the enjoyment of Spring) wherever we find it?

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

Global Application:

The quest to follow Christ and work to bring God's justice into our world can be tough, disheartening, and dehumanising. It is not easy to face the horrors of injustice and the very real impact of evil across the globe, and the challenge to confront and change these realities can harden us and desensitise us. In addition, once we have become committed to a cause, or have invested significant amounts of time, resources, energy and passion to serving our world in Christ's name, we can get so caught up in the work, that we lose the meaning, the spirit, of our work, and it can start to become mere legalistic, outward observance. It is easy for passion to become cold institution – as it has in so many movements, denominations and organisations. When this happens, we can end up becoming as inhuman and destructive as the evils we seek to fight. That's why, while celebrating the justice, ethics and morality of God's Reign, and God's law, the Lectionary also reminds us to ensure that our hearts remain committed and united with God. The passion that is described in the Song of Solomon is not just about our sexuality as expressed in relationships. As many celibates testify, sexual energy, when channelled into service of God's Reign, can strengthen, impassion and guide our service in the world. When we live passionately in every aspect of our lives, including our work for justice, our creativity is inspired, our compassion is deepened, our ability to connect and collaborate is enhanced, and we have greater resources to combat burn-out and disillusionment. This week, as we strive to bring greater justice to our world, and as we confront evil in whatever form we find it, may we be careful to nurture our passion for God, for others, and for our world, ensuring that our hearts stay open and connected, and our lives reflect God's Reign both inwardly and outwardly.

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B AUGUST 30, 2015

Local Application:

It is a pity that for too many people religion – especially Christianity – is seen as cold, institutionalised and heartless. It seems we have become more like the religious leaders who were concerned with keeping the outside clean than we would like. We have, too often, made following Jesus about excluding “sinners”, and keeping ourselves pure (read: obedient to the legalistic outward observance of our denomination or group). As such, our faith has driven wedges into families, set communities at odds with one another, and ignored real issues of justice in favour of asserting our own particular “rights” or needs. The passion that has characterised so many revival movements and justice movements in history has often been lost, and replaced with shallow emotionalism and glitzy, escapist worship gatherings. These are hard words for us to face, but until we do, we cannot restore our faith to the passionate, Christ-following, neighbour-loving, heart-capturing movement that it really is. As individuals and churches, we will never be effective in reaching our communities, our friends and our families with the message of the Gospel, until that message is the inspiration of our own lives. But, when our hearts are captured by the Gospel again, and when we become passionate lovers of God, of people and of the world, we won’t have to “preach” in order to be heard. The Gospel will be seen in our lives, and others will know the life-giving touch of God through us. As individuals and communities of faith, let us not underestimate the value of passionate hearts, both for our own spiritual health, and in bringing healing and restoration to those around us.

SERMON OUTLINE

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 gathered round him

Jesus was at the peak of his popularity as crowds flocked to hear his teaching & be healed... But at the same time he was attracting attention from the religious authorities who were jealous of his popularity - & so they tackle him...

1. The Trouble to be confronted 1-2: Jesus was at this time in Galilee but *the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him*. They had travelled all that way north to find out about him... Now they are able to find wrong-doing:- *Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?* It was laid down in the Talmud (Oral Tradition) that all defilement should be cleansed before eating... This the disciples had failed to do...

2. The Tradition to be considered 3-8:-

a) *Mark explains the tradition: For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders v3.*

b) Jesus expounds the truth – as he quotes Isaiah:- *“This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.” You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.’*

3. The Transgression to be condemned 14f:- The Jews feared that eating with unclean hands would defile them but Jesus redirects their thinking:- *15there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.’ 21For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come...* This is at the heart of human sin – the reason Jesus came – to save us from sin

By Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"Looking in the Mirror," the Rev. Martha Sterne, Day 1

http://day1.org/1406-looking_in_the_mirror

www.churchnewsireland.org

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B AUGUST 30, 2015

"The Power of Words," Dianne Bergant, CSA, *America*
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3124

"Look into Your Hearts!" John R. Donahue, SJ, *America*
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2129

"The Pharisees," Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations
<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-pharisees>

"Cleanliness or Godliness," the Rev. Reggie Weaver, Day 1
http://day1.org/4046-cleanliness_or_godliness

CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children, Proper 17B, 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-17-22nd-sunday-in.html>

"Acting Just Like Children," Frances Woodruff, On the Chancel Steps
<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2012/08/19/acting/>

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

Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity, Ordinary 22, at word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary by Larry Broding.
<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

"The Rules of the Game," 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-or22su.php>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
My Song Is Love Unknown
Fairest Lord Jesus
For The Beauty Of The Earth
O Jesus I Have Promised
What I Have Vowed
Jesus, My Desire
Let Me Shine
Let The Flame Burn Brighter
Lifesong