

## The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B September 20, 2015

The choice we all face every day is highlighted in the Lectionary readings this week: wickedness or righteousness. As strange as those two words may sound to contemporary ears, their definitions are simple. Wickedness is the choice to live selfishly, violently, and without regard for others or for consequences. Righteousness is the choice to live peacefully, responsibly, humbly, generously, graciously and in sacrificial service of others. For too long we have believed that we could find joy and life in the ways that the Scriptures call "wickedness". Now, if we are to find the healing we seek – both personally and globally – we need to embrace the ways that the Scriptures call "righteousness". It is not over stating the case to say that our lives depend on how we choose.

### INTRODUCTIONS

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

#### **Proverbs 31 : 10-31**

We heard last Sunday the beginning of this book of collected wise sayings. This is how it ends, with a complete poem about the ideal wife.

#### *or* **Wisdom of Solomon 1 : 16-2:1, 12-22**

Those who have rejected God are both foolish and wicked, says this writer. Although they mock the godly, and even kill them as they did to Jesus, they should learn that holiness has its own rewards.

#### *or* **Jeremiah 11 : 18-20**

Jeremiah in his time suffered greatly and, like Jesus, endured plots to kill him and destroy all he stood for. He was, he says, like a lamb being led to slaughter.

#### **Psalm 1**

Righteous people are blessed because they do not follow the ways of the wicked, but love God's instruction. They are like trees planted by streams, bearing fruit and always succeeding. The wicked, however, are destroyed.

#### *or* **Psalm 54**

A plea for God's help and rescue because proud and violent people seek to attack the Psalmist. But, God sustains God's servant and destroys those who attack him. In response the Psalmist gives thanks and offers sacrifices to God.

#### **James 3 : 13-4:3, 7-8a**

The writer asks his Christian readers always to consider their motives. So much harm is done when jealousy and envy determine our actions. The wise want only what God wants for them.

#### **Mark 9 : 3-37**

Jesus tries to make his destiny clear to his disciples, but they are still thinking there is only glory ahead and arguing about greatness in the kingdom. They do not understand that a leader must always be a servant.

### TEXT OF READINGS

[http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB\\_RCL/Pentecost/BProp20\\_RCL.html](http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp20_RCL.html)

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### **Collect One**

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O Lord, we beseech thee,  
let thy continual pity cleanse and defend thy Church;  
and, because it cannot continue in safety without thy succour,  
preserve it evermore by thy help and goodness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Collect Two

O Lord,  
Hear the prayers of your people who call upon you;  
and grant that they may both perceive and know  
what things they ought to do,  
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

*Presider or deacon*

As we welcome the children of God in the name of Jesus, let us offer prayers for all in every danger and need.

*Deacon or other leader*

For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For all peoples and their leaders, and for justice, mercy, and peace in the world.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For all who work for daily wages, and for their employers and managers.

**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 the victims of war, prisoners and refugees, and the dying and dead.

**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.**

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*

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God of mercy, hear the prayers we offer this day and send on us your wisdom from above, that our lives may be full of gentleness and understanding; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Jesus, by your death on the cross, we have found pardon for our sins and life in the kingdom. We celebrate the gifts that have made us members of the family of God. We pray, "Let the cross be lifted up among us", and respond, "Hear us, Lord."

Jesus, we pray for the church in every place. May its message remain clear and unencumbered by such aesthetic concerns that those outside the gospel fail to understand and accept its reconciling power. Let the cross be lifted up among us. **Hear us, Lord.**

Jesus, we hold before you our councillors and our council administrators. Help them to understand the true needs of the destitute and powerless, the orphan and the fragile elderly, those housebound and those with wasting diseases. Let the cross be lifted up among us. **Hear us, Lord.**

Jesus, we intercede for the youth of the Boys and Girls Clubs in our community, the Youth organisations, those gathered in our church, and in sports and athletic disciplines. Let the cross be lifted up among us. **Hear us, Lord..**

Jesus, we pray for our clergy and those who share the work of pastoral ministry. Empower them by your Holy Spirit. Enlighten them in their sermon preparations, teaching and visiting. As they counsel, baptise, do the work of weddings and funerals, and preside at worship, inspire and encourage them. Let the cross be lifted up among us. **Hear us, Lord.**

Jesus, for the arts and crafts being created within our membership, we pray. Let the cross be lifted up among us. **Hear us, Lord.**

Forgive us, Saviour, when the message of the cross is cheapened in any way among us. Let the cross be lifted up among us. **Hear us, Lord.**

We commend to you, O Christ, all our attempts to serve you in faithfulness. **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. (*Silence for prayer.*)

P O Lord, God almighty, Your power and glory are great indeed, yet You have revealed them chiefly through the humble service of Your Son, who became our servant even to death on the cross for our redemption. Teach us such humbleness of heart that we may seek the greatness that comes from being servant of all. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P O Lord, God almighty, continue to be present with Your Church and to bless all who serve her. Bless our bishop, \_\_\_\_\_ our Rector, \_\_\_\_\_ our clergy,

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\_\_\_\_\_, all missionaries and church workers and those preparing for full-time service to Your Church as clergy and commissioned ministers. Bring peace and harmony to Your Church and this congregation, that together we may do the work You have called us to do with joy. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

P O Lord, God almighty, bless the nations with peace, bless all people with leaders who respect the rule of law, who protect the weakest among us, who execute justice with mercy, and who work for the common good. Be with our political leaders and all public servants. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

P O Lord, God almighty, You created us to live in the bonds of family. Bless all husbands and wives, parents and children, single and widowed, that our homes may be places of blessing, faith, and love in Christ. We pray especially for those not yet born. Guard their fragile lives and support all women during pregnancy and childbirth. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

P O Lord, God almighty, all our needs are known to You—both of body and soul. We pray You to grant healing, relief, and peace to all the sick and those who suffer, especially [*\_\_\_\_\_ and those near death, \_\_\_\_\_*]. Let all who cry to You in need find mercy and peace to support them in their time of trouble. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

P O Lord, God almighty, grant peace to those whose hearts and minds are filled with anxiety and turmoil. Give hope to those who battle with depression, and sustain those with mental illness. Help us all to know the full consolation of Your love, especially when we are overcome with anxiety and despair. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

P O Lord, God almighty, none of us is worthy of Your grace, yet in love You invite us to sit at the Table of our Lord and receive the gift of heavenly food in the bread which is Christ's body and the cup of His blood. Make us ready to receive Him who comes to us here, and grant us Your Holy Spirit, that through this Holy Communion we may be nourished to eternal life. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

P O Lord, God almighty, all good things come from You, and You have given us an abundance of good things. Make us wise and responsible in the use of all Your gifts, that through them we may honor You and support the work of Your kingdom here on earth. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

P Into Your hands, O Lord, God almighty, we place all those for whom we have prayed, even our very selves, trusting in Your mercy through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C** **Amen.**

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### POST COMMUNION

God of mercy,  
through our sharing in this holy sacrament  
you make us one body in Christ.  
Fashion us in his likeness here on earth,  
that we may share his glorious company in heaven,  
where he lives and reigns now and for ever.

### 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.

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

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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  
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.

God of unsearchable mystery and light,  
your weakness is greater than our strength,  
your foolishness brings all our cleverness to naught,  
your gentleness confounds the power we would claim.  
You call first to be last and last to be first,  
servant to be leader and ruler to be underling of all.

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Pour into our hearts the wisdom of your Word and Spirit,  
that we may know your purpose and live to your glory. Amen.

O God, our teacher and guide,  
you draw us to yourself  
and welcome us a beloved children.  
Help us to lay aside our envy and selfish ambition,  
that we may walk in your ways of wisdom and understanding  
as servant of your peace. Amen.

### LECTIONARY NOTES 1

#### ***Proverbs 31:10-31:***

- This passage, given it's time/context of writing, is actually pretty woman-friendly, even if it does require a 'capable wife' to be a jack-of-all-trades. After all, the passage describes a person who is strong, giving, fearless, a salesperson, successful, etc. Changing the gender of the pronouns doesn't change much about the passage either.
- Notice not a lot is said about the woman being a woman of faith. Perhaps these attributes are seen as 'interwoven' into the behaviors she is to live out – her actions. How would you describe your ideal partner in life? Do you practice those behaviors yourself that you wish to find in someone else?
- "Many woman have done excellently, but you surpass them all." That would be a nice compliment to hear from one's spouse!

#### ***Psalm 1:***

- A typical psalm in its dualistic good/bad, righteous/enemies set up, but psalm is a little different since it doesn't emphasize God's wrath upon the enemies. Instead, those who do not have God in their life perish because of being outside God's law, consequences of their own actions/choices.
- "On [God's] law they meditate day and night." I find it difficult, even as, or especially as, a pastor, to be faithful in my study and meditation on the scriptures. In a bible study I led a few years back, [\*Companions in Christ\*](#), one of the units dealt with meditating on the scriptures. The participants and myself all found it difficult - to focus in on the text and on God, to tune out all the business of the world around, to really dwell in the text. The visual image this psalmist shares of how our lives might be dwelling in God's law, however, encourage us to keep trying: "They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season".
- The tree/stream imagery is much like a sponge soaking up water - we absorb, take in God's word. But better than a sponge, which just absorbs and then is simply soaked, a tree soaking water bears fruit - bears results -bears change because of God's word.

#### ***James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a:***

- While many of us are comfortable claiming our gifts, I think many of us, *wisely*, would hesitate claiming wisdom as a gift. Who would you call wise? Are you wise? What does wisdom mean to you?
- James recognizes that one can be wise without being wise "from above" - what kind of wisdom does our world most appreciate?

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- James prizes wisdom that "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy." That's a very wide and broad definition of wisdom. Using James' definition, is there anyone you thought wise that you wouldn't put now in this category?
- Conflict arises from our own cravings - that's a unique way of putting it, but perhaps right on!
- "Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you." Let it be so!

### **Mark 9:30-37:**

- "He did not want anyone to know it" - Mark's gospel is notorious for the "messianic secret" theme - Jesus constantly trying to hide or obscure his true identity somehow. Why do you think Jesus wouldn't want people to pin down his identity?
- What would you think if a person was predicting death and suffering for themselves? These days, we'd probably (rightly) want the person to get psychological help, worrying that they were depressed or suicidal. How do you think Jesus expected them to react?
- Apparently, the disciples weren't too bothered - they were busy talking about who was greatest among them. Power struggles in the church existed from day one, pre-'church' even.
- What does it mean to welcome a child? How are we meant to be child-like when it comes to faith?

*By Beth Quick*

## **LECTIONARY NOTES      2**

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

Once again the Lectionary offers us a choice. This time it is between our own selfish desires, ambitions and power, and serving, loving and sharing with others as we follow the way of Jesus. In one set of readings, the life of the righteous person is applauded. From the righteous wife in Proverbs 31 (clearly written in a time of patriarchy, and now applicable to both men and women, rather than just the women!), to the righteous person who studies God's law in Psalm 1, to James' call to live a humble life submitted to God, to Jesus' teaching that the greatest in God's Reign must be servants, the Scriptures call us to righteousness, humility, service and generosity. We are to avoid the ways of the wicked, which are driven by selfishness, jealousy, violence and the hunger for power. This wicked life is reflected in the second set of readings for this week. In the Wisdom of Solomon, the wicked seek to attack and harm the righteous person. In Jeremiah, the prophet pleads for God's protection against the wicked who plot against him. In Psalm 54 the Psalmist, like Jeremiah, pleads for God's help against his enemies. And in the Gospel, Jesus predicts his death, but also predicts his resurrection. Essentially, the message of the readings for this week is that life, peace, joy, love, prosperity and grace are found through living humbly, simply, kindly, generously, compassionately and with grace, conscientiousness, resourcefulness and responsibility. If we reject these values, we reject the ways of God's Reign, and we doom ourselves to conflict, violence, lack, misery and judgment. As James suggests, though, even faith can become a mask for our worst human instincts, and so we need the attitude

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of submission to God's ways, and the humility to repent and receive forgiveness if we are to live in ways that bring life to us and to others. As Brian D. McLaren puts it in a quote from his upcoming book: "We are increasingly faced with a choice...not between kindness and hostility, but between kindness and non-existence."

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** Peacemaking, conflict resolution, poverty alleviation and ecological justice in our world are not just about addressing specific situations and causes, but are about changing the entire way we live on the planet, which means working to dismantle all systems that do any kind of violence to others – religious systems that oppress and exclude people of different beliefs and practices; economic systems that unfairly favour large corporations and countries over smaller, less developed ones with trade restrictions, biased tariffs and subsidies; and global power structures that prioritize the interests of wealthy and powerful nations over smaller and weaker ones. The essential shift is toward kindness, grace and love. The Scriptures make it clear that selfishness, expediency, domination, jealousy and hoarding are all part of what it calls wickedness, while humility, kindness, grace and generosity are righteousness. There is no question that living according to the ways of "wickedness" increases suffering and conflict in the world, while living according to the ways of righteousness bring peace, joy, healing and connectedness. The reality of our world, though, is that most of us live between these two extremes, and as we seek to embrace righteousness more and more, so we find ourselves at odds with any systems and people that are corrupt, selfish and violent. The result is that, like Jesus, Jeremiah and others who have stood for the values of God's Reign, we may well find ourselves being persecuted. But, this is the price we pay for dreaming of a better world and committing to bring it about. And, as more of us embrace the ways of righteousness, so the momentum grows, until finally, one day, the dream becomes reality

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** It is a tough choice to give up personal power and self-interest in favour of the common good, but this is the way of Christ – the way of peace, service, grace and love. In every community there are those who seek to "work the system" to benefit themselves. Sometimes this is done maliciously, but often it is done with simple ignorance or neglect of the needs of the weak, poor, voiceless and defenseless. The truth is that we are all oppressed and we are all oppressor at some point in our lives, and we all need to learn to turn away from our worst selves. Taking up the cross of Christ means that we give up our quest to be the greatest, come alongside those who suffer and are persecuted and support them, defend them and work with them for their upliftment, while ensuring that the wealthy and powerful do not benefit at their expense. Who are the ones who need this kind of support and protection in your community or church?

### **SERMON OUTLINE**

**Mk 9.30-37 They went on from there**

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Jesus & his disciples are touring Galilee... He had been transfigured on the mountain & had healed the boy with an evil spirit Now it was time to move on... He wanted some privacy with his disciples *31for he was teaching* them important lessons...

1. A Warning 31-32: about what was going to happen to him - *'The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands & they will kill him* – the 2<sup>nd</sup> prediction made of his death – cf 8.31. He was trying to prepare them for what lay ahead... & *three days after being killed, he will rise again* – a prophecy of the Resurrection - *32But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.* If only they had been bold enough to ask!!

2. A Weakness 33-35: uncovered by Jesus as they *came to Capernaum*... He asked them: *'What were you arguing about on the way?'* – knowing rightly what was going on! Too embarrassed to answer - *34But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest* – pride, prestige & position!

3. A Welcome 36-37: Jesus corrects their ambitious ideas - *'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all & servant of all.'* & uses a child as a visual aid - *37'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, & whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'* – importance of children's ministry & youth work - & of having a welcome for JC

By Norman Porteous

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

["Insignificant Greatness,"](http://day1.org/1435-insignificant_greatness) the Rev. Stephen Lewis, *Day 1*  
[http://day1.org/1435-insignificant\\_greatness](http://day1.org/1435-insignificant_greatness)

["The Way of the Wise,"](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3164) Dianne Bergant, CSA, *America*  
[http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=3164](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3164)

["Can You Walk the Walk?"](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2193) John R. Donahue, SJ, *America*  
[http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=2193](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2193)

"Envy," Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.  
<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-envy>

"A Hopeful Fanatic," The Rev. Barbara Lundblad, *Day 1*  
[http://day1.org/4049-a\\_hopeful\\_fanatic](http://day1.org/4049-a_hopeful_fanatic)

[Ministry Matters](http://www.ministrymatters.com/bin/2780/this-sunday-92312), September 23, 2012.  
<http://www.ministrymatters.com/bin/2780/this-sunday-92312>

### CHILDREN

Worshipping with Children, Proper 20B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown  
[http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/year-b-proper-20-25th-sunday-in\\_30.html](http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/year-b-proper-20-25th-sunday-in_30.html)

"One Sound," Frances Woodruff, On the Chancel Steps,

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<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2012/09/09/one/>

["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/>

["A Liturgy for Covenanting with the Church School,"](#) 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-or25smsgn.php>

### **HYMN SUGGESTIONS**

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God  
O Master Let Me Walk With Thee  
I Am Thine, O Lord  
O Jesus I Have Promised  
Freely, Freely  
Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace  
Serve Others  
A Song Of Peace  
God Of Justice  
God Of This City