



FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 5, 2020

We are still the body of Christ even though we are unable to gather for public worship during this time of world-wide crisis. While we cannot be together in person around our Lord's Table, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer.

The mystery of God's ways is sometimes hidden from the wise and intelligent. Jesus of Nazareth associates with the lowly and outcast. Like Paul, we struggle with our own selfish desires and seek God's mercy and forgiveness. We gather to be refreshed by our Lord's invitation: "Come to me, all you that are weary." Gathered around word and prayer, we find rest for our souls.

Prelude

Voluntary in A Major

William Selby
Early American (1738-1798)

Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom 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 Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

silence for reflection and self-examination

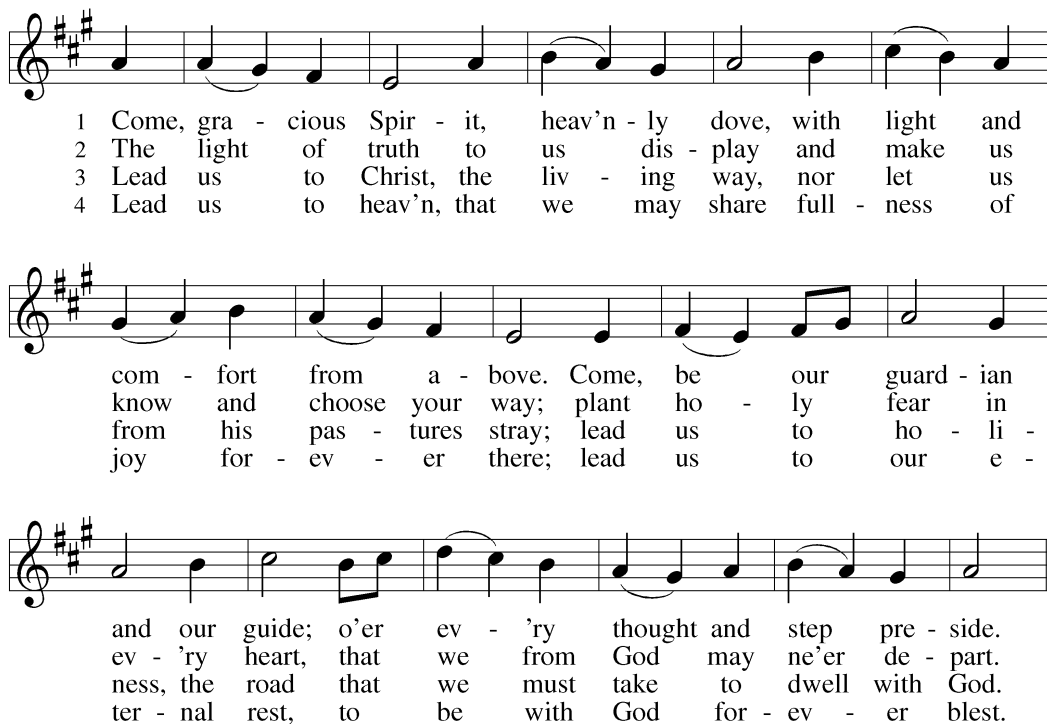
Most merciful God,
we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen

Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Hymn

Come, Gracious Spirit, Heavenly Dove



1 Come, gra - cious Spir - it, heav'n - ly dove, with light and
2 The light of truth to us dis - play and make us
3 Lead us to Christ, the liv - ing way, nor let us
4 Lead us to heav'n, that we may share full - ness of
com - fort from a - bove. Come, be our guard - ian
know and choose your way; plant ho - ly fear in
from his pas - tures stray; lead us to ho - li -
joy for - ev - er there; lead us to our e -
and our guide; o'er ev - 'ry thought and step pre - side.
ev - 'ry heart, that we from God may ne'er de - part.
ness, the road that we must take to dwell with God.
ter - nal rest, to be with God for - ev - er blest.

Text: Simon Browne, 1680–1732, alt.
Music: WAREHAM, William Knapp, 1698–1768

Apostolic Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Prayer of the Day

You are great, O God, and greatly to be praised. You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Grant that we may believe in you, call upon you, know you, and serve you, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

WE GATHER AROUND THE WORD AND PRAYERS

First Lesson - Zechariah 9:9–12

The coming messianic king will inaugurate an era of disarmament and prosperity. Because of God's covenant with Israel, they are designated as "prisoners of hope."

⁹Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

- ¹⁰He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war-horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- ¹¹As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.
- ¹²Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.

Psalm 145:8-15

This is a hymn of praise to the Lord, mighty in divine deeds, yet tender and compassionate.

- The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
- ⁹The LORD is loving to everyone
and his compassion is over all his works.
- ¹⁰All your works praise you, O LORD,
and your faithful servants bless you.
- ¹¹They make known the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your power;
¹²that the peoples may know of your power
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom;
your dominion endures throughout all ages.
- ¹⁴The LORD is faithful in all his words
and merciful in all his deeds.
- ¹⁵The LORD upholds all those who fall;
he lifts up those who are bowed down.

Second Lesson - Romans 7:15–25a

*Life enslaved to sin is a catch-22 existence in which we know good but do not do it and do things we know to be bad.
Through Jesus Christ, God has set us free from such a futile existence.*



- ¹⁵I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.
- ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.
- ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.
- ²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Holy Gospel - Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30

*Jesus of Nazareth chides people who find fault with both his ministry and that of John the Baptist.
He thanks God that wisdom and intelligence are not needed to receive what God has to offer.*

Jesus spoke to the crowd saying: ¹⁶"To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

²⁵At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."



Sermon

"Rehabilitating Sin"

Romans 7:15 - 25a

The Reverend Glenn Busch, D.Min.

In a side chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, hangs a stunning painting by Baroque artist Michelangelo Merisi de Caravaggio. The painting, finished in 1601, is titled *Conversion on the Way to Damascus*; but is often referred to as 'The Conversion of St. Paul.'

It is an arresting painting. It's one of those paintings that seizes the viewer's attention—as much for the subject matter as for Caravaggio's unique and innovative style.

With his horse standing idly in the background, Paul is lying flat on his back, arms and legs all akimbo; his helmet rests to one side where it has tumbled from his head. Paul has literally been flattened by a powerful religious experience.

Well, you know the rest of the story. After this upending experience on the road to Damascus, Paul reverts from being a fanatical enemy of Christianity, who enthusiastically persecuted the followers of Jesus, to one of Christianity's most ardent promoters whose future writings would dominate the New Testament canon.

In our epistle reading this morning we heard a passage from one of Paul's writings. Ah, but not just any old passage, mind you; rather, what you heard was a passage that is considered by many New Testament scholars to be the most important passage in Paul's entire *Letter to the Romans*, which in itself is thought to be one of the most important writings in all of *The New Testament*. So, we are dealing with a consequential passage here.

Listen again to Paul's words: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ... For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do."

Who among us can't identify with those words? Who hasn't indulged a little *schadenfreude* or harbored false prejudices or uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbor? Who hasn't had one of those guilt-ridden moments when we say to ourselves: "I can't believe I did that"?

Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury put it this way: "... I look at my past self and think, 'How could I have thought that? How could I have done that?' But I did and it's part of what God works with."

But even so, there is something more going on in this passage than the mere recognition that we mess up now and again. What Paul was getting at in his few well-chosen words is something that speaks more broadly of our human predicament.

Dare I use a discredited word to describe that predicament, a word that has fallen into such disfavor that we are loath to use it outside the safe confines of public worship?

Sin. Paul was describing sin.

But you have to wonder, have we become so sophisticated that we can no longer talk about sin, no longer reflect on its meaning as a component of character as well as behavior? Perhaps that has something to do with why our public discourse seems to have lost the guidance of a moral compass, why truth becomes expendable as it slides into a delusional and dangerous fantasy world of alternative facts.

Yuval Levin in his recent and very fine book, *A Time to Build*, even interprets our current political unrest and polarization through this lens, writing: “Our crisis of isolation, division, and cultural conflict is in many respects a crisis of meaning and even a result of a religious hunger left unsated by a culture that has lost some of its access to traditional vocabulary of sin and redemption.”

It was a highly dramatic moment of conversion that led Paul to eventually accept sin as a condition he could not deal with on his own—a condition that could only be resolved through repentance and total reliance on the grace and love of God. But I hardly need to remind you of that. It’s a conviction you affirm at Holy Trinity each time you begin the morning liturgy with a “Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness” during which you say these words: “Most merciful God, we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot help ourselves.” Those are words that acknowledge our human condition as Paul explained it, words that profess our belief that God continues to offer us a path to redemption and renewal.

This recognition of our sinfulness, combined with a reliance on God’s forgiveness, has the potential to change lives, as it did Paul’s. But here’s the thing: that change need not come about in as dramatic a fashion as it did for Paul.

Rather, our experience of God’s merciful presence in our lives is more likely to manifest itself over time, in subtle and cumulative ways, in ways that demonstrate God working within you, even when you do not notice.

There is a scene in the play *Becket*, by French playwright Jean Anouilh, wherein King Henry II confronts his good buddy Becket because Becket has changed.

Henry, you see, had made Becket Archbishop of Canterbury, much against Becket’s will. It was a cynical political ploy, the king assuming that Becket, because of their past friendship, would be his sycophant and gladly do his bidding.

But it didn’t turn out that way. After Becket’s reluctant consecration he began to take God’s presence in his life seriously, and soon to take his duties as archbishop seriously, too, much to King Henry’s displeasure.

In this scene, Henry confronts Becket, reminding him of their former friendship, reminding him of the good old days they spent together hunting and drinking and carousing, and when they stood side by side and fought together as soldiers.

“This is not like you,” the exasperated king thunders at Becket; “you are not yourself.”

To which Becket gives this response: “Perhaps I am not myself.” Referring to the day he was made archbishop, Becket says to the king: “I felt for the first time that I was being entrusted with something, that’s all. There in that empty cathedral, that day when you ordered me to take up this burden, I was a man without honor. And suddenly I found it, the honor of God. I felt for the first time that I was being entrusted with something.”

Like Paul, Becket was a changed man, a man who had been transformed. It could happen to anyone. It could happen to you, affecting the way you think, the way you behave, and the way you feel.

In that same order for confession and forgiveness we were considering earlier, the way the liturgy progresses is that your pastor says to you these words, which are from the *First Letter of John*: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

But notice what follows: Your pastor then says, “But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Then, and this is the really important part, he pronounces words of absolution, declaring to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

That’s a reminder that no matter what you have done, you are never beyond the reach of God’s grace, love, and forgiveness. It’s a reminder that it is never too late, never too late to amend your life, to trust in the promises of God and to begin again.

A few years ago I discovered a simple prayer I like very much. It was written by one of the brothers at the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, a religious order of the Episcopal Church. It says everything that I have been trying to say to you this morning. It goes like this: “God of forgiveness, I am sorry. Mend what I have broken, gather what I have scattered, and restore your tarnished likeness in me. Illumine my conscience with the steady beam of your truth, that I may see my sins as you see them, with compassion and not with blame.”

With all of that in mind, maybe it won’t be so hard to speak openly of sin after all.

Hymn of the Day

Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways



- 1 Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways to keep his stat - utes still!
- 2 Or - der my foot-steps by your word and make my heart sin - cere;
- 3 As - sist my soul, too apt to stray, a strict - er watch to keep;
- 4 Make me to walk in your com-mands, 'tis a de-light - ful road;



Oh, that my God would grant me grace to know and do his will!
let sin have no do - min-ion, Lord, but keep my con-science clear.
and should I e'er for - get your way, re - store your wan-d'ring sheep.
nor let my head or heart or hands of - fend a - gainst my God.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748, alt.

Music: EVAN, William H. Havergal, 1793–1870

The Prayers

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

We pray for the Church, that, freed from the law of sin, it may delight in serving you and your gospel for the sake of all people. Sustain us as we share your word. Embrace us as we work for justice. Free us from stagnant faith.

We pray for the well-being of creation. Help us protect the air, water, and land from abuse and pollution. Free us from apathy in our care of creation and direct us toward sustainable living.

We pray for the nations. Guide those in positions of authority that they may lead with humility and justice as they work for ethical and moral policies and guide difficult conversations. Uphold our courts. Guide our national, state, and local governments in finding ways to redress the wrongs of racism and to ensure equality for all. Lead us to expansive love for our neighbor.

We pray for those who are sick and suffering and for all in need. Help us console the fearful, feed the hungry, house the homeless, comfort the grieving. Take their yoke upon you and ease their burdens. Give your consolation and free us from all that keeps us bound.

We pray for this congregation. Empower us to take on Christ's yoke, serving one another with gentle and humble hearts, that this community may give witness to the strength of your love. Shine in this place that we might notice the ways your love transforms our lives.

We give thanks for those who have died. Welcome them into your eternal rest and comfort us in our grief until we and all your people are joined with them in new life.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

WE WORSHIP WITH OUR OFFERINGS

The needs of Holy Trinity's mission and ministry are ongoing during these times of upheaval and turmoil. Many of our outreach ministry partnerships are facing increased requests for services. May we be faithful and generous as we support our mission "to care actively in the name of Jesus Christ."

Offerings may be mailed to the church or dropped off at the church office.

You may also use the online giving portal on our website.

Go to www.holytrinitylynchburg.org and click on "Give."

You may also download the "GivePlus Church" app for your smart phone from Apple or Google.

Offertory Prayer

Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us – our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen*

Blessing

Almighty God, Father, ✙ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen

Dismissal

Our service now begins. Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Voluntary in D Major

William Selby



Our appreciation to The Reverend Glenn Busch, D.Min., for preaching today.
He is Rector Emeritus of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in High Point, North Carolina,
and he and his wife Kathy are faithful and active participants in the life of our congregation.

The altar flowers are given to the glory of God
by Deb Serio
in honor of Ruth Belcher's birthday.



The candles are given to the glory of God
by Carol Barclay
in honor of her family.

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Lynchburg, Virginia

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