



TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 23, 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 prophet Isaiah calls the people to look to their spiritual ancestors as the rock from which they were hewn. Jesus of Nazareth declares that the Church will be built on the rock of Peter's bold confession of faith. God's word of reconciliation and mercy are keys to the Church's mission. Paul urges us to not be conformed to this world, but to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, using our individual gifts to build up the body of Christ. From word and prayer, we go forth to offer our spiritual worship through word and deed.

Prelude

Fantasie in C Major

J. S. Bach
(1685-1750)

Hymn

We All Are One in Mission



1 We all are one in mis - sion; we all are one in call,
2 We all are called for ser - vice, to wit-ness in God's name.
3 Now let us be u - nit - ed, and let our song be heard.



our var - ied gifts u - nit - ed by Christ, the Lord of all.
Our min - is - tries are dif - f'rent; our pur - pose is the same:
Now let us be a ves - sel for God's re - deem-ing Word.



A sin - gle great com - mis - sion com - pels us from a - bove
to touch the lives of oth - ers with God's sur - pris-ing grace,
We all are one in mis - sion; we all are one in call,



to plan and work to - geth - er that all may know Christ's love.
so ev - 'ry folk and na - tion may feel God's warm em - brace.
our var - ied gifts u - nit - ed by Christ, the Lord of all.

Text: Rusty Edwards, b. 1955

Music: KUORTANE, Finnish folk tune

Text © 1986 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

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

O God, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life. Be our strong foundation and form us into the body of your Son, that we may gladly minister to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

First Lesson - Isaiah 51:1-6

*Just as God had called Abraham and Sarah and given them many descendants,
so now God offers comfort to Zion. God's deliverance will come soon and will never end.*

¹Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness,
you that seek the LORD.
Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were dug.
²Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him,
but I blessed him and made him many.
³For the LORD will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her waste places,
and will make her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the LORD;
joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.
⁴Listen to me, my people,
and give heed to me, my nation;
for a teaching will go out from me,
and my justice for a light to the peoples.
⁵I will bring near my deliverance swiftly,
my salvation has gone out
and my arms will rule the peoples;
the coastlands wait for me,
and for my arm they hope.
⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and those who live on it will die like gnats;
but my salvation will be forever,
and my deliverance will never be ended.

Psalm 138

The psalm is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord on high, who has saved God's servant and cares for the lowly.

¹I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I will sing your praise.
²I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name,
because of your love and faithfulness;
³for you have glorified your name
and your word above all things.
⁴When I called, you answered me;
you increased my strength within me.
⁵All the kings of the earth will praise you, O Lord,
when they have heard the words of your mouth.
⁶They will sing of the ways of the Lord,
that great is the glory of the Lord.
⁷Though the Lord be high, he cares for the lowly;
he perceives the haughty from afar.
⁸Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe;
you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me.
⁹The Lord will make good his purpose for me;
O Lord, your love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

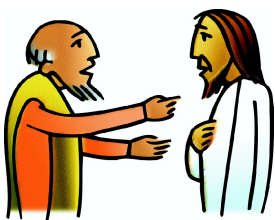
Second Lesson - Romans 12:1–8

In response to God's merciful activity, we are to worship by living holistic, God-pleasing lives. Our values and viewpoints are not molded by this age, but are transformed by the Spirit's renewing work. God's grace empowers different forms of service among Christians, but all forms of ministry function to build up the body of Christ.

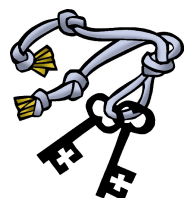
¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Holy Gospel - Matthew 16:13-20

At a climactic point in Jesus of Nazareth's ministry, God reveals to Peter that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God," and Jesus responds with the promise of a Church that will overcome the very gates of Hades.



¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.



Sermon

Rock Solid
Isaiah 51:1-6; Matthew 16:13-20
The Rev. Dr. Glenn Busch

The photographs, on their slick, glossy paper, are dull and faded with age, having been taken long before the age of high-speed cameras and sophisticated lenses. Most are in sepia tone; and the people in them strike stilted poses common to a bygone era.

There are names and dates on the backs of some, but on far too few. Which is a shame because I do not recognize many of the faces; don't even know their names. But still, they are family, my own flesh and blood. That unruly pile of photos resides in a misshapen cardboard box that has lived in many houses over the years; but all previous owners are dead now, which is how the box eventually found its way to my house, where I serve as its current owner and custodian.

The photographs in that box are visual proof of lives lived and not forgotten, snapshots of events that are part of a family's collective heritage and history.

Occasionally I am drawn to that moldering pile of photographs just to reminisce, which can be an emotional undertaking.

I see faces of the dead as they were in the vibrancy of their youth. I see smiling babies whom I remember visiting in retirement homes.

My uncle is there, dressed in his army uniform, the young soldier honored for his bravery whose life took such a dark turn and ended far too tragically and far too soon.

My great grandmother looks back at me from the pile too—the strong matriarch who survived so many hardships: The Great Depression, wars, the early death of her husband, and a whole lot more.

I dip into the box of pictures every so often because I know how important it is to know what you are part of, who you are connected to as you engage in the life-long process of becoming who you are.

Tradition, heritage—they are not the whole story, but they are a main ingredient in the clay out of which we fashion something that we call us.

Just look around in this church. Is it not like being inside a large box of old photographs and memories?

You see faces and history depicted in art and symbols and stained-glass windows. You listen to words of scripture written centuries ago by ancient ancestors. We repeat prayers that have been on the lips of the faithful hundreds of years. We sing hymns, chant psalms, and recite creeds that remind us of this family's values and beliefs.

Names appear on plaques on the columbarium wall; you light candles in memory of loved-ones and friends who have died.

And each Sunday (when there is no pandemic to contend with) you gather around the family table for a grand thanksgiving meal of bread and wine.

Oh, this place roars with memories, which is one of the reasons that we congregate, here and in other churches much like this one, because we are a people with a heritage, a people with a past that continues to shape who we are and what we shall become.

It is vital that you know what you are part of, such is the rock upon which faith is built, the kind of faith that gives life meaning and direction; the kind of faith that supplies strength when the winds of adversity blow hard against you.

The writer of Isaiah, our Old Testament reading this morning, said it this way: “Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.”

The church, this church, is like a box of old photographs. It is a repository of faith that has been passed along that we might live in accordance with the ways of God and pass that heritage along to those who come after us.

Our gospel reading for this morning, from Matthew, is one of the more significant passages in that gospel. It marks a turning point in Jesus’ ministry, notably when he announces to the disciples that he is about to die.

In that passage, Jesus asks the disciples this question: Who do people say that I am?

The disciples respond with a variety of plausible answers: Well, some say you are John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and then there are still others who say Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

Then Jesus, moving from the general to the specific, gets personal and asks them pointedly: “But who do you say that I am?”

One of the main reasons we become part of a Christian community, such as this one, is so that we can continue to wrestle with that question. For surly how we answer will have much to do with what we become. “Who do you say that I am?” It was a question asked of the disciples, but is surely meant for us and for those of every generation.

Some years ago, when Arthur Burns was chair of the Federal Reserve, he was also a member of a prayer group that met weekly to pray and discuss matters of mutual concern.

The meeting always ended with a prayer. But Burns had never been asked to offer the final prayer because all of the other members were Christian and Burns was a Jew, and the other members purportedly didn’t want to offend him or put him in an awkward position, so they just didn’t ask.

But one day, a relative newcomer to the group who didn’t know that Burns was a Jew, asked him to say the concluding prayer, which he did.

This is what Burns prayed: “Lord, I pray that you would bring Jews to know Jesus Christ. I pray that you would bring Muslims to know Jesus Christ. (And don’t miss this part.) Finally, I pray that you would bring Christians to know Jesus Christ.”

Sometimes I wonder how much I would miss that box of old photographs if, for some reason, I didn’t have it anymore, if I didn’t have that simple connection to those who went before me and who are part of me.

Of course, you could ask the same question about this place and all that it represents: the way it keeps tradition alive; the way it conveys the assurance of forgiveness and God’s eternal grace and love; the way it helps you deal with your losses and your heartaches; the way it helps you find meaning and direction for your life; the way it shapes character and helps you determine what is honorable behavior and what is not; the way it connects you to those who sat in these pews before you and are here no longer; and especially the way it could influence future generations, once you have been folded into the corporate memory of this place.

There is one symbol I have yet to mention this morning because I wanted to save it for the end, and that is the baptismal font.

If you ever get to a place in your life where faith begins to wobble and you wonder why you bother, come and stand beside it. Run your fingers over it and feel the texture of the stone. Contemplate it, the way you would a great painting or some other venerable piece of art. Let it speak to you. Let it remind you of all the faithful who have gone before you, and of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Look upon it and store the image of it in the cluttered picture-box of your mind, and bring it out when you need it, the snapshot of it sitting there, year after year, generation after generation, solid as a rock, solid as the faith and the people it represents.

Hymn of the Day

The Church's One Foundation



1 The church's one foun - da - tion is Je - sus Christ, her Lord;
2 E - lect from ev - 'ry na - tion, yet one o'er all the earth,
3 Though with a scorn - ful won - der this world sees her op - pressed,
4 Through toil and trib - u - la - tion and tu - mult of her war,
5 Yet she on earth has u - nion with God, the Three in One,



she is his new cre - a - tion by wa - ter and the word.
her char - ter of sal - va - tion one Lord, one faith, one birth:
by schisms . . rent a - sund - er, by her - e - sies dis - tressed,
she waits the con - sum - ma - tion of peace for - ev - er - more;
and mys - tic sweet com - mu - nion with those whose rest is won.



From heav'n he came and sought her to be his ho - ly bride;
one ho - ly name she bless - es, par - takes one ho - ly food,
yet saints their watch are keep - ing; their cry goes up: "How long?"
till with the vi - sion glo - rious her long - ing eyes are blest,
Oh, bless - ed heav'n-ly cho - rus! Lord, save us by your grace,



with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.
and to one hope she press - es with ev - 'ry grace en - dued.
and soon the night of weep - ing shall be the morn of song.
and the great church vic - to - rious shall be the church at rest.
that we, like saints be - fore us, may see you face to face.

Text: Samuel J. Stone, 1839–1900

Music: AURELIA, Samuel S. Wesley, 1810–1876

The Prayers

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the Church, the world, and all who are in need.

Gracious God, you are our foundation in Jesus Christ, your Son, whom we confess as the living Lord. Despite the hardships experienced during this pandemic, bless the Church so that Christians around the globe may stand firm on the rock who is Christ.

You call forth praises from the far reaches of the universe to the smallest of creatures. Join our songs to theirs, that a spirit of praise and thanksgiving will arouse us to cherish and care for this wondrous home you give us.

Bless the leaders of nations, that they govern with integrity and attend to the needs of the poor. Help those in power to regard those in need with mercy, so that they fulfill your loving purposes in their care for all peoples.

Bless our various means of communication: our phones, the internet, our postal service, and delivery businesses, that our communities be sustained for fruitful life together.

Though we walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfill your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are sick or in need of care, to those who are bereaved, or in trouble or adversity.

In Holy Baptism, you welcome us into the Church, in which we, though many, are one in Christ. May we recognize in ourselves and in one another the unique gifts you have given us for building-up the body of Christ and God's mission through this congregation for the sake of the world.

You are the everlasting Rock from which we were hewn, and you restore your people to joy and gladness. In blessed memory and hope, we thank you for the lives of our beloved dead. Bring us with them to your eternal presence.

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; 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

Fugue in C Major

Dieterich Buxtehude
(1637-1707)



Our appreciation to The Reverend Dr. Glenn Busch 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 Nancy and Kim Hall
in honor of their thirty-fourth wedding anniversary.*

*The candles are given to the glory of God
by Nancy and George Childress
in honor of their eighteenth wedding anniversary.*



Our Mission: "To care actively in the name of Jesus Christ."

The liturgy is reprinted by permission: Augsburg Fortress Annual License 44905.
The hymns are reprinted by permission: OneLicense.net A-725273.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Lynchburg, Virginia

Organist-Choirmaster - J. William Greene
Pastor - Dennis S. Roberts