

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins, 21st Sunday of Pentecost, October 13, 2024, St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland.

The theme for today is “Give me a break.”

That’s how you and I would feel if we sat down with Jesus and asked him what we need to do to inherit eternal life. And then got this response: “You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

Now, very few of us would be willing to do what Jesus is asking. It’s a very high bar, isn’t it? Most of us, if not all, would find that condition, that requirement, that expectation, that responsibility, not necessarily beyond our means, but at least well beyond our willingness.

For all sorts of reasons, we simply are not going to sell all that we have and then pass all of that income onto the poor. We’ll do something, maybe a lot, but not all. Family comes first. Neighbors come first. Schools come first. Organizations come first. Including organizations that serve the poor.

Yes, that’s it. We’ll give something to institutions to pass on to the needy. But, to sell all that we have, everything, and give all to the poor, is simply not going to happen. Sorry, Jesus. “Give me a break.” To which, Jesus might well say, “Then, do what you can, or at least what you would like to do.”

Now, the ball is back in our court. We ask God to give us a break. And God does. “If not all, then some.” And that becomes our new motto. And we feel pretty good about this possibility. We probably can do more. Maybe not a lot more, but a little more.

Will Jesus be okay with that? We hope so, don’t we. Because that’s where we are, and that’s where we intend to stay. We’ll try to do “more,” but we’re not up to the “all.” “Please, Jesus, give us that break.”

And I think the Risen Christ does just that. And that slight change in expectation is comforting in itself. From “all that we have” to “some of what we have.”

Maybe “a lot of what we have.” After all, do we really need “all that we have”? Probably not.

So, we offer to Jesus not “all,” but “some.” Maybe even “a lot.” And I suspect that the Lord is probably okay with that response. I sure hope so. It is comforting to think so. Something within our means, not beyond our means.

But, is this the end of the story? No, because our circumstances change, don't they? Which means we need to recalculate, sometimes in the immediate future and sometimes looking way out. And wherever we are, we need to abide by this motto: “Do what we can.”

Of course, this is not what Jesus said, is it? It is not what Jesus commanded. He said “all.” We responded with “some.” Is that okay with the Risen Lord? We sure hope so. That's the “break” that we need. Or at least, that's the “break” that we want.

And if we don't do the “all,” but only “some,” is that okay with the Lord?

Well, I think that what is “okay” with the Lord is what we feel we can do at any given point in time. And then perhaps add something to that. A tip, if you will. We're very conscientious in restaurants, but maybe less so in Church. The Lord certainly is entitled to a tip, but what the Lord wants is not a tip for the Lord, but a thoughtful sharing of time, talent and treasure for others, particularly those going through rough times.

One of the characteristics of this gathering, this community, this parish, is thoughtful and generous sharing. Can we do more as individuals and as a congregation? Probably. But that's true for everybody. It's the nature of human kind. We need to feel pride in what we are doing.

One of the chants at sporting events is “We want more.” Well in the case of religious-minded folks – that would be us - “We want more” is not a demand, as much as it is “Let's take a look at what we can do?” And when this group asks that question, the response, both as a community and as individuals, is impressive.

And such giving is contagious. People watch what we do, as a community and as individuals. That curiosity in itself is a reminder. Not “Give me a break,” but “Is there more we can do?”

And, of course, there is “more.” From today’s passage from Amos: “Seek good and not evil, that you may live.” **(Amos 5:14)** “That you may live.” That’s “more,” isn’t it? That makes “doing good” a pretty strong reason to keep at. And, here we are. “Keeping at it; doing more.” With a strong belief that “for God all things are possible.” **(Mark 10:27)**

One of the values of a focus on Jesus is that we are reminded through his birth, life, death, and resurrection, that the Creator is more than a Starter. No, the Creator that we worship is engaged well beyond the Start of Things. Even all the way to today, and even to this beautiful church. The Lord is counting on us to be the Lord’s representative to a world in need. Oh yes, there’s a selfish side to worship – we like it here – but there’s also a reminder of the joy of giving back, and sharing what we value.

Our final hymn today – “Joyful, joyful, we adore thee” – speaks of “joy divine.” Isn’t that what we seek - joy - and isn’t that what we feel right here? Not “give me a break, Lord” but “how can we help, Lord?” That’s a much more appropriate motto for our jerseys.

Jerseys? Yes, jerseys. We are a team. And our schedule is full. The opposition is strong. But with the Lord as our captain, we are pretty strong too. And that’s a really good feeling. Our motto is not “give me a break,” but “the Lord is risen.”

Amen.

Morning Prayer – Pentecost 21 - Sunday – October 13, 2024

Hymn 636, stanzas 1-3 – How firm a foundation

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
to you that for refuge to Jesus have fled?

“Fear not, I am with thee; O be not dismayed!
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
to you that for refuge to Jesus have fled?”

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
the rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
for I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

BCP - Page 39 – Greeting

This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

BCP – Pages 41 – Invitation to Confession

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us kneel or sit in silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite good and mercy.

BCP – Pages 41-42 – Confession and Absolution – kneeling or sitting

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.

But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy Name. *Amen.*

The Almighty and merciful Lord grant us absolution and remission of all our sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit. Amen.

BCP – Page 44 – Venite

O come, let us sing unto the Lord;
 let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
 and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great God,
 and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are all the corners of the earth,
 and the strength of the hills is his also.
The sea is his, and he made it,
 and his hands prepared the dry land.
O come, let us worship and fall down
 and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For he is the Lord our God,
 and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.
O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
 let the whole earth stand in awe of him.
For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth,
 and with righteousness to judge the world and the peoples with his truth.

Psalm 90:12-17

So teach us to remember our days
 that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.
Return, O Lord; how long will you tarry?
 be gracious to your servants.
Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning;
 so shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.
Make us glad by the measure of the days that you afflicted us
 and the years in which we suffered adversity.

Show your servants your works
and your splendor to their children.
May the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us;
prosper the work of our hands; prosper our handiwork.

First Reading: Amos 5: 6-7, 10-15

Seek the Lord and live, or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it. Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bright righteousness to the ground! They hate the one who reproveth in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth. Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins – you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate. Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time; for it is an evil time. Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said. Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Second Reading: Hebrews 4:12-16

The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account. Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

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Hymn 482

Lord of all hopefulness

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy,
be there are our waking, and give us, we pray,
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
be there at our labors, and give us, we pray,
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Whose hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment , whose presence is balm,
Be there at hour sleeping, and give us, we pray,
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Gospel: Mark 10:17-31

The Holy Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ, according to Mark.
Glory to you, Lord Christ.

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what your own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, and follow me." When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! And the disciples

were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them, and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.” Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundred fold now in this age - houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

The Gospel of the Lord. *Praise be to you, O Christ.*

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

BCP – page 53 - The Apostles’ Creed - standing

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord.
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

BCP – page 54 – the Lord’s Prayer

The Lord be with you. *And with thy spirit.*
Kneeling or sitting, let us pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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, for ever and ever. Amen.

BCP – page 55 – Suffrages A

O Lord, show thy mercy upon us;
And grant us thy salvation.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness;
And make thy chosen people joyful.

Give peace, O Lord in all the world;
For only in thee can we live in safety.

Lord, keep this nation under thy care;
And guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let thy way be known upon earth;
Thy saving health among all nations.

Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;
Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Create in us clean hearts, O God;
And sustain us with thy Holy Spirit.

Collect for Pentecost 21

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

BCP – page 58 - The General Thanksgiving

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men.

We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts we may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

BCP – page 59 – Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication unto thee, and hast promised through thy well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name thou wilt be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

Announcements – seated – flowers

Hymn 717 - America – portions of stanzas 1 and 3 - standing

*My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside
let freedom ring.*

BCP – page 834 – Prayer for After Worship – remain standing

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honor and praise of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

BCP – page 59 – The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

Hymn 562, stanzas 1-3 – Onward, Christian soldiers

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
with the cross of Jesus going on before!
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe:
forward into battle, see his banners go,
Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
with the cross of Jesus going on before!

At the sign of triumph Satan's host doth flee;
on, then, Christian soldiers, onto victory!
Hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise;
Christians, lift your voices, loud your anthems raise.
Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
with the cross of Jesus going on before!

Like a mighty army moves the Church of God;
Christians, we are treading where the saints have trod;
we are not divided, all one body we,
one in hope and doctrine, one in charity.
Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war
with the cross of Jesus going on before!

Dismissal

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Lessons for Pentecost 21 – October 13, 2024

Collect: Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

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that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

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be gracious to your servants.

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So shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

Make us glad by the measure of the days that you have afflicted us

and the years in which we suffered adversity.

Show you servants your works

and your splendor to their children.

May the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us;

prosper the work of our hands; prosper our handiwork.

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