

**Sermon preached by the Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost, September 8, 2024.**

In today's Gospel: "Jesus has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak." **(Mark 7:37)**

No wonder that Jesus is highly regarded. Why wouldn't we want to learn more about this carpenter from Nazareth and his remarkable healing ability? After all, we could use a little healing ourselves. Maybe he can help us. Maybe not at the level of healing that we see in today's gospel. But at some level that would enhance our lives and the lives of those we touch.

God expects you and me to lead by example. After all, God leads by example. Can you say "Jesus of Nazareth"?

Yes, Jesus is our example. We have found for ourselves and others that the Path of Christ is rewarding and healing for ourselves and those we touch in the Name of Christ.

Think of a muscle. It wants to be used. It wants to be applied. It wants it to help. That is what the muscle is there for. To be recognized, developed, maintained, and applied in helpful ways.

You and I are Muscles for Christ. We admire the manner by which Jesus pursued his purpose. It wasn't easy, but it was worth it. We're here after all, centuries later, in thanksgiving. And in our own training and in applying this training to a world in need.

And that world in need includes ourselves, our families, our neighbors, and, yes, even our enemies. God wants us, and expects us, to help keep the Creation on a positive path. The Letter of James has a phrase for this path: "Mercy triumphs over judgment." **(James 2:13)** It's a heavy order, a big expectation, but that's what muscles are for. We have been tapped to assist the Creator. And we have felt the tap, and are now tapping ourselves. Welcome to the Church of Christ.

It's not an easy task, by any means. But it is a satisfying task for ourselves and for others. Muscles have a purpose, and we are pursuing that purpose. And it's a very good feeling to be doing what God has designed us to do.

The Good News is that we can pursue that calling in a whole bunch of ways. Think of the gyms that are available to us. And think of all the different machines in those gyms – and perhaps in our basements - that can help us develop muscles.

And think of all the different exercises that strengthen those muscles. Again, we can think of churches as gyms. St. Christopher is a gym. The Bible is a gym. The life of Christ is a gym. Maybe we are gyms. Do we help keep ourselves and others in good shape? That's what we're doing right here and wherever and however we share our relationship with the Lord.

We come together to remind ourselves of our purpose in life, which is to care for the Creation. But workouts are tough if we're doing them alone. Partners in muscle development are helpful. Think of confession and absolution and fresh starts. These we can pursue alone. Just ourselves and the Lord. But isn't it true that our gym experience is enhanced if we have a spotter?

That's what the Lord is for us. And it is what we can be for others. We can do things on our own most of the time, but sometimes we need help. Somebody, by our side, to rescue us from weight too great for us. From today's Psalm: "Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help!" **(Psalm 46:4)**

Think of Jesus as the spotter. One who helps us when we need help. We feel more confident in life with a spotter. Jesus doesn't do all the work us, but he reminds us of both our potential and limitations and our ability to make adjustments.

We are spotters for others. And isn't it a good feeling to be able to help others achieve their goals? And to have others help us achieve our goals? From today's passage from Isaiah: "Be strong, do not fear. Here is your God." **(Isaiah 35:4)**

That's our role in this setting, isn't it. If we didn't need help, we wouldn't be here. But, when we recognize that we need help, it sure is comforting to know that Jesus the Spotter is available. And not just available, but eager to help us.

Many of you are familiar with Spotify. It's the on-line service that makes all sorts of music accessible. And it has an interesting and, to me, an ironic symbol. A circle, with three wavy lines inside, all three of which express to me sadness rather than happiness. It would make more sense to flip the three lines so that the symbol conveys happiness. You keep the simplicity but convey a different message.

But what's your point Mr. Preacher? Only to suggest that when we access Spotify, we think of Jesus the Spotter. One who gives you and me confidence as we pursue our lives. We will stumble – that's our nature - but we will also get back up. Jesus helps us do that. He is the muscle that saves us. The capital S Spotter, if you will. With an expectation that we will be spotters for others in Christ's Name.

One more thought. Going to the gym, working out if you will, is good for us and for others. Church is a gym. Not any old gym. But a gym designed **by the Lord** for our benefit and the benefit of others. Welcome to this very handsome gym called St. Christopher by the Sea. With a logo, not of a sad, exhausted face, but of a cross – The Cross – a powerful symbol of God's love for us and, in thanksgiving, our love for God.

Can you hear God calling, as our coaches called us? Give me 10! 10 push-ups. 10 commandments. Makes us stronger. And through us, makes the world stronger.

Thank you, Lord. Amen.

## **Morning Prayer – Pentecost 16 - Sunday – September 8, 2024**

### **Hymn 375 – Give praise and glory unto God**

Give praise and glory unto God, the Father of all blessing;  
his mighty wonders tell abroad, his graciousness confessing.  
With balm my inmost heart he fills, his comfort all my anguish stills.  
To God be praise and glory.

The host of heaven praiseth thee, O Lord of all dominions;  
and mortals then, on land and sea, beneath thy shadowing pinions,  
exult in thy creation might that does all things well and right.  
To God be praise and glory.

What God hath wrought to show his power he evermore sustaineth;  
he watches o'er us every hour, his mercy never waneth.  
Through all his kingdom's wide domain, his righteousness and justice reign.  
To God be praise and glory.

### **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 146**

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, O my soul!  
    *I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.*  
Put not your trust in rulers, nor in any child of earth,  
    *for there is no help in them.*  
When they breathe their last, they return to earth  
    *and in that day their thoughts perish.*

Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help!  
*whose hope is in the Lord their God.*  
Who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;  
*who keeps his promise for ever;*  
Who gives justice to those who are oppressed,  
*and food to those who hunger.*  
The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind;  
*the Lords lift up those who are bowed down;*  
The Lord loves the righteous; the Lord cares for the stranger;  
he sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.  
The Lord shall reign for ever,  
*your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!*

**First Reading: Isaiah 35:4-7a**

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

**Second Reading: James 2:1-17**

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes, and say, “Have seat here, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “Stand there,” or, “Sit at my feet,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For the one who said, “You shall not commit adultery,”

also said, "You shall not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

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

### **Hymn 288 – Father eternal**

Praise to God, immortal praise, for the love that crowns our days;  
bounteous source of every joy, let thy praise our tongues employ:  
all to thee, our God, we owe, source whence all our blessings flow.

All the plenty summer pours; autumn's rich o'er flowing stores;  
flocks that whiten all the plain; yellow sheaves of ripened grain:  
Lord, for these our souls shall raise grateful vows and solemn praise.

As thy prospering hand hath blessed, may we give thee of our best;  
and by deeds of kindly love for thy mercies grateful prove;  
singing thus through all our days praise to God, immortal praise.

### **Gospel: Mark 7:24-37**

**The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John. *Glory to you, Lord Christ.***

Jesus set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter." So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Decapolis. They to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they

begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

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 16**

Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

**BCP – page 823 – Prayer for Social Justice**

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **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 395 – Prayer for Peace – remain standing**

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave  
with you: "Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace  
and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and  
reign now and for ever. *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 595 – God of grace and God of glory**

God of grace and God of glory, on thy people pour thy power;  
crown thine ancient Church's story; bring her bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour.

Lo! the hosts of evil round us scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!  
From the fears that long have bound us free our hearts to faith and praise:  
grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days.

Cure thy children's waring madness, bend our pride to thy control;  
shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;  
let the gift of thy salvation be our glory evermore.  
Grant us wisdom grant us courage, serving thee whom we adore.

## **Dismissal**

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



## Lessons for 16 Pentecost – September 8, 2024

**Collect:** Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you will all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **First Reading: Old Testament: Isaiah 35:4-7a**

Say to those who are of fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.

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

### **Psalm 146**

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

*I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.*

Put not your trust in rulers, nor in any child of earth,  
*for there is no help in them.*

When they breathe their last, they return to earth,  
*and in that day their thoughts perish.*

Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help!  
*whose hope is in the Lord their God;*

Who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;  
*who keeps his promise for ever;*

Who gives justice to those who are oppressed,  
*and food to those who hunger.*

The Lord set the prisoner free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind;  
*the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;*

The Lord loves the righteous; the Lord cares for the stranger;  
*He sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.*

The Lord shall reign for ever,  
*your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!*

## **Second Reading: James 2:1-17**

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have seat here, please," while to the one who is poor ;you say, "Stand there" or "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For the one who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by law of liberty. For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who shows no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment." What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

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you may go – the demon has left your daughter.” So she went home, found the child lying on the bed and the demon gone. Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and mute to speak.”

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