

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

2001 Windsor Drive

P.O. Box 342

Newton, Kansas 67114



Sunday, July 4, 2021

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Communion in the Absence of a Priest

Worship at 10:15am

## Opening Acclamation

**Minister of the Word:** Grace and peace. In the name of Christ.

**People:** **Thanks be to God.**

## The Collect of the Day

**Minister of the Word:** God be with you

**People:** **And also with you.**

**Minister of the Word:** Let us pray.

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## We Proclaim and Respond to the Word of God

### The Lessons

#### The First Reading

Ezekiel 2:1-5

A reading from Ezekiel

He said to me: O mortal, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you. And when he spoke to me, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. He said to me, Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day. The descendants are impudent and stubborn. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD." Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Psalm 123

To you I lift up my eyes \* to you enthroned in the heavens.

As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, \* and the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,

So, our eyes look to the Lord our God, \* until he shows us his mercy.

Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy, \* for we have had more than enough of contempt,

Too much of the scorn of the indolent rich, \* and the derision of the proud.

## The Second Reading

|| Corinthians 12:2-10

A reading from Second Corinthians

I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

**Thanks be to God.**

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

## The Gospel

Mark 6:1-13

He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching.

He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." So, they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

## Proclamation

Mary Anne McCloud

What do you think about when someone mentions your hometown? Maybe it is the sight of your mother's overabundant garden or running through the backyard to get to your grandparents' house. Maybe your hometown holds fond recollections of playing summer baseball or walking to the corner store—a few coins in hand—with your best friend. Maybe it is a creaky porch that your family used to occupy every Saturday morning, or your father's distinctive recipes, those familiar smells rising from the stove. Maybe you remember how hot and sticky the summers were, or the dozens of times your back ached because of shoveling snow.

A hometown can communicate comfort and security. There is something about driving on well-traveled streets, of walking into a restaurant and seeing people you know or who know your parents and cannot believe how you have grown. There can be profound warmth in such a familiar world.

Sometimes, though, hometowns are less the stuff of dreams than they are of nightmares. Hometowns can trigger instances of deep trauma, resurrecting decades-old anxieties. Maybe the memories of your hometown are not comforting at all. Maybe they are pockmarked by being chastised for your faith (or lack thereof), dismissed for your crazy political beliefs. Maybe your hometown is the place you first looked evil in the eyes, where you were ostracized for who you knew yourself to be or what you wanted to do with your life or whom you loved. Hometowns conjure up all kinds of memories and emotions. Over the years, they become saturated with profound import and meaning and can even take on a life of their own. Hometowns can be lifegiving and heart-rending and everything in between. Today, our gospel text from Mark recounts Jesus returning to his hometown with his disciples in tow. And for all the pleasant moments that might have brought to his mind, there were, we hear, some significant challenges.

Now, the gospels do not give us much on Jesus' upbringing; his family picture albums seem sparse after the wise men depart from the inn. But based on a handful of textual clues, it is safe to assume that Mary and Joseph were devout Jews who trusted in God's plan and provision, and that Jesus would have been the beneficiary of such a faithful rearing. Remember that scene where adolescent Jesus is at the synagogue for

three days, sitting amidst the religious leaders, peppering them with questions? Take that and run with it. Let your imagination fill in the gaps of his formative years.

Nearly twenty years later, Jesus sets out from his home, invites some working-class guys to accompany him, and begins his formal ministry. He is seen all over the place, traveling in and out of homes and villages and cities around the Galilee, teaching and healing and calling others to a new sort of life. Along the way, Jesus utters some cryptic sayings about the kingdom of God and near-blasphemous statements about his relationship to God. Throughout Mark's gospel, he tells those who witness these things not to speak, for fear that their testimonies will fall into the wrong hands. But word spreads, as word tends to do, and people flock to Jesus, either for their own sakes or for the sake of another. Some want to be made well in body or soul. Others, it seems, want to see a miracle with their own two eyes. In Mark 5, immediately before our text today, crowds congregate to glimpse Jesus casting out demons in the land of the Gerasenes. Others attend to him raising the daughter of a synagogue official and healing a woman with a blood disorder. Jesus has been busy, and away from home, but the road now leads him back to Nazareth.

Surely Nazareth was a place of some comfort for Jesus. Surely it held smells and sights and sounds that forced him to stop and think of playing in the dusty alleys or sitting down to a Sabbath meal with his family. But whatever nostalgia flooded back was quickly stemmed by a demon of a different sort; Jesus names it as a lack of faith, a collective inability to see the hand of God at work because of past assumptions: "Where did this man get all this? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house."

If a hometown is a comfortable place, it is understandable why a prophet would not be welcome there. Prophets are not dictated by comfort or custom but driven by divine obligation. Hometowns are places often bound, sometimes paralyzed, by precedent. Prophets come to unsettle, to startle a people into new ways of seeing the world, and to demand them to cease their spiritual backsliding. Hometowns occasionally toe the line of the status quo. Prophets disrupt the status quo, speaking light and life into the creeping darkness of what has come to be "normal" or "natural".

Thinking about a hometown is an exercise in thinking about the complexity of being human, our myriad, everyday habits—some good, some not so good. It’s about appreciating the intricate beauties of a place we’ve called home for years. But it is also about shrewd ways we insulate our lives from failure, from fear, from “those people.” What are the hometowns we have created for ourselves? Where are the places of comfort that have brought us grace? Where are the sealed-off places where we are doing our best to insulate ourselves and curate a nice, clean life, untouched by those we deem filthy? It is understandable why we would be hesitant to let Jesus into either one of these spaces. Why would we want to disrupt that which is good and cozy, especially in a world where good news can be hard to come by? Alternatively, why would we allow ourselves to be stretched and challenged, for our lives to be undone, willingly, with all the awkwardness and unease that can bring?

“Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.”

It is uncomfortable to let a prophet’s presence wreak havoc in the corners of your heart, in your own house, among your own people. But letting God speak into what we think of as the warmest, coziest places of our lives might increase our souls’ capacity for love—for both God and our neighbors. If we allow Jesus’ prophetic presence to sink in, something like scales might well fall from our eyes, encouraging us to see those who were, for the longest time, invisible. We might start to witness walls of hostility and division come down, or cease to be built in the first place. We might learn to welcome those whom we, at one time, labeled “unsafe” or “other” or “criminal”.

What might it look like for us to be disrupted by Jesus the prophet here and now? There are no pat answers; each life is different and experiences grace and healing uniquely. But I would wager that it would look like taking stock of “how things have always been done” and exploring how the church can proclaim and enact hope in transformative ways. Opening ourselves, our communities, our neighborhoods, and our nation to such a prophet is not easy. But doing so can bring about beautiful fruit and leave us, like those in the synagogue, “astounded” at God’s words and works.

*Amen.*

## We Pray for the World and the Church

*The prayers may be led either by the Minister of the Word, a lector or other appointed petitioner.*

Raise up, O God, sound leadership for your Church and for our nation; that strong in character, steeped in wisdom, exercising the gifts of reason and vision, and looking to you, this people may be well led:

**Our eyes look to the Lord until we see God's mercy.**

Help us to see your hand at work within us even at our points of frailty and limitation, for your power is made perfect in weakness, and your grace alone is sufficient:

**Our eyes look to the Lord until we see God's mercy.**

May your hand be strong upon the Church; that our courage may be founded in you, leading, and sustaining through any hardship and in times of joy:

**Our eyes look to the Lord until we see God's mercy.**

As Jesus could do no great sign in his own hometown, so assist us in knowing that you are at work in those with whom we are most familiar, and stir us to a respect and affection for the gifts you have given others:

**Our eyes look to the Lord until we see God's mercy.**

Anoint with the oil of healing all those who call upon you, remembering especially those for whom our prayers are now offered Anita, Barbara, Becky, Beth, Brooks, Bertha, Delinda. Danny, Dave, Denny, Elaine, Eldon, Ian, Jaden, Jean, Jeanette, Jerry, Joan, Kent, Suzanne, Ralph, Robby, Robert, that using all means of healing as may avail, they may be raised up once more:

**Our eyes look to the Lord until we see God's mercy.**

As Christ sent the Twelve out two by two with little for the journey, so teach us our dependence upon you and one another that our proclamation may be sure:

**Our eyes look to the Lord until we see God's mercy.**



Pray for the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea

Pray for the people of Bolivia, Chile, and Peru

Pray for the Church of the Ascension, Neodesha, The Reverend Sidney Breese, and their lay leadership.

For our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, for our own Bishop Cathleen Bascom, for all bishops and ministers, and for all the holy people of God.

For Heartland Minster and their Shepherd, The Reverend Marc McDonald, Rector of St Andrews Episcopal Church, Emporia Kansas.

We give thanks for St. Matthew's and Trinity and pray for St. Matthew's Payee Program, Northridge Elementary School their teachers, staff, students and families, Priscilla's Pet Pantry, and all outreach of our churches.

Lord God Almighty, you have made all the peoples of the earth for your glory, to serve you in freedom and in peace: Give to the people of our country a zeal for justice and the strength of forbearance, that we may use our liberty in accordance with your gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### We Exchange the Peace

**Minister of the Word:** The peace of Christ be always with you.

**People:** *And also with you.*

### We Prepare the Table and Share the Gifts of God

**Minister of Reserved Sacrament:** God be with you.

**People:** *And also with you.*

**Minister of Reserved Sacrament:** Let us pray.

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## The Lord's Prayer

And now our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say:

**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 of 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**

## The Prayer of Humble Access

*The Minister of the Reserved Sacrament and People*

**We do not presume to come to this your Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your Table. But you are the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.**

**Minister of the Reserved Sacrament:** The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life. *Amen*

## Post Communion Prayer

Let us pray:

**Loving God, we give you thanks for restoring us in your image and nourishing us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of Christ Body. Now send us forth a people, forgiven, healed, renewed; that we may proclaim your love to the world and continue in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen**

## Grace and Dismissal

**Minister of the Reserved Sacrament:** Go forth in Jesus' Way of Love.

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Ministers this Service

Maggie Snow, Minister of Reserved Sacrament

Mary Anne McCloud, Minister of the Word

Fred Schroeder, Lector

## Sermons That Work- The Episcopal Church

*The Rev. Dr. Andrew ("Drew") Harmon is the Senior Associate Rector at St. James Episcopal Church in Baton Rouge, La. Prior to his coming to St. James, he served as a parish priest in the Diocese of North Carolina. In addition to parish ministry, he has worked in university ministries at Clemson University, retirement community chaplaincy, and as undergraduate theology instructor at Marquette University, where he completed his Ph.D. in Historical Theology.*

