

St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Lebanon, Oregon
Sunday January 31, 2021 ~ 4th Sunday after the Epiphany
Rev. AJ Buckley

Greeting

Opening Acclamation

- Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- And blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things both in heaven and on earth: Mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and in our time grant us your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Moses said: The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." Then the LORD replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die.

- Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's People
- Thanks be to God

Psalm 111

1 Hallelujah!

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, *
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

2 Great are the deeds of the LORD! *
they are studied by all who delight in them.

3 His work is full of majesty and splendor, *
and his righteousness endures for ever.

4 He makes his marvelous works to be remembered; *
the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

5 He gives food to those who fear him; *
he is ever mindful of his covenant.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works *
in giving them the lands of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice; *
all his commandments are sure.

- 8 They stand fast for ever and ever, *
because they are done in truth and equity.
- 9 He sent redemption to his people;
he commanded his covenant for ever; *
holy and awesome is his Name.
- 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; *
those who act accordingly have a good understanding;
his praise endures for ever.

Second Lesson – 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him. Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one.” Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. “Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

- 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 1:21-28

Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

- This is the Gospel of the Lord.
- Thanks be to God

***“They were astounded at his teaching,
for he taught them as one having authority,
and not as the scribes.”***

Jesus taught with a power and conviction that is reserved for the prophets, apostles, and God. This scene depicts Jesus as teacher, prophet and healer. These threefold roles are the defining characteristics of Jesus. It was more than a recitation of the Scripture, as scribes might do, it was the wisdom and conviction with which Jesus taught. The ferocity of his love and dedication was and is astounding. It's no wonder he caused a stir.

It's what he did with the power given to him by God that is astounding. He didn't use it for self-gain, he used it to command demons and free this man from possession.

Authority and power are tricky things. They can easily corrupt. They can puff up, just like Paul describes knowledge, rather than build up--as Paul describes love. Oregonians can be described as folks who don't really respond well to authority figures. It's understandable to be that way when it can be hard to trust those in authority to make wise decisions. Because of this aversion to power and authority, Jesus is often seen more as a regular guy, a friend, a brother than as a teacher, prophet, and healer, let alone as an authority figure. I think it'd be fair to say we are mildly allergic to authority. Authority is often described as something that has to do with knowledge. For example, we use the phrase, “an authority on the subject” which is to say they're knowledgeable about the topic at hand. Knowledge, has been said, to be a kind of power in and of itself. I believe there is some Truth to that. When knowledge is hoarded rather than shared, it can lead to a divide between the haves and have nots. Knowledge, too, can be corrupted. It can be distorted.

All of this is to say our relationship with power and authority is a complicated one. I have been contemplating lately what is our place as Christians when it comes to authority. Is it right for a Christian to have authority and power? And, if so, how do we use it? It's a tricky question. We can see the error of our ways in the belief of Manifest Destiny and the way we treated the native peoples of this land. We believed we were following “God's will.”

I was watching a movie this week called “*Wolf Walkers*” set in the late 1600's in Ireland. The authority figure in this movie often cited God's will as a way of an excuse to do some pretty terrible and harmful things to the people of the town, and the wolves of the forest. We have to be careful what we ascribe as God's will. Only God has full and complete knowledge of God's desires for humanity, but Scripture shows us what that might look like. Perhaps it would be fair to say that only God has true Authority and Power. That's the way it needs to be because humans often choose to use power to their own benefit rather than for the good of others.

I think that may be jumping the gun. I don't think we need to throw the baby out with the bathwater so to speak. I have seen the good those who hold authority have done, like Nelson Mandela, or Gandhi, for example. Both could be described as people with authority, and yet, they chose to use it to help others in need. I do, however, think that a Christian's relationship with power and authority needs to be thoroughly considered for biases and preconceived notions. We can do this through prayer and contemplation, but we

also need to hold each other accountable. We need someone who's gonna do that for us; we cannot walk this path alone. If entrusted with authority and power, one needs to be completely attentive and responsive to the motives for the decisions we make with the power given us. For example, as a white person, I need to be aware of the privilege that comes with, and actively seek to change this, and give space to minority voices so that they can speak up, too. These considerations are not to be taken lightly, lives are at stake here. I think Jesus knew that while he was teaching and healing, and we would be wise to remember that now, too. It's in the everyday things--as parents, grandparents, as bosses, as community leaders--that we will find we have the power to make a difference. As Christians, we are called to do so in a way that "respects the dignity of every human being" as our Baptismal Covenant states. We are called to "resist evil, and when we fall into sin, repent..." This is our sacred duty. It isn't easy, but that's why we've got each other to be sounding boards, to be mirrors, to hold one another accountable so that we might be responsive to the needs and concerns of ourselves, our neighbors and God. **Amen.**

Nicene Creed

(BCP p.358)

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. **Amen.**

Special Prayers for Epiphany IV

The response is: Lord graciously hear us.

In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, let us pray for all who need the cleansing power of the Holy One of God. For the church and all who teach the truth of God.

Lord, hear us.

People Lord, graciously hear us.

For our parish family of St. Martin's that we have the grace to grow into our calling in worship, service, stewardship, and mission.

Lord, hear us.

People Lord, graciously hear us.

For Michael our Presiding Bishop, Diana our Bishop, for all clergy and all who minister in Christ.

Lord, hear us.

People Lord, graciously hear us.

For prophets in every land who rebuke the spirits of greed and violence, oppression and despair.

Lord, hear us.

People Lord, graciously hear us.

For those burdened by anguish or illness, and for those who care for them with love and healing.

Lord, hear us.

People Lord, graciously hear us.

For married couples and all companions growing together in selfless love.

Lord, hear us.

People Lord, graciously hear us.

For catechumens experiencing the liberation of the spirit.

Lord, hear us.

People Lord, graciously hear us.

For the faithful departed in the presence of God's holy power, especially for Lee Gibson aka "Catfish" one of our homeless friends who was found in the river in Albany and for all our sisters and brothers on the street; for Jill Namitz, Suzi's sister-in-law, and Jill's brother-in-law Steve; for Kay's sister Donna Bauer, for Lois Marrow, and Don Woods; for the 400,000+ Americans who have died from Covid, and for all whose names are known to God. May light perpetual shine upon them.

Lord, hear us.

People Lord, graciously hear us.

For ourselves and all those we love, especially those on our prayer list and those we mention at this time, silently or aloud

Lord, hear us.

People Lord, graciously hear us.

God our Teacher, speaking with holy authority, liberating us from the forces of evil: Hear the prayers we offer this day and give us courage as we proclaim your truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin & Absolution

BCP p. 360

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Most merciful God,
we confess that 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.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. **Amen.**

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins
through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all
goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in
eternal life. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer *said in unison*

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,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Prayer for St. Martin's *said in unison*

God of Love, open our eyes and ears
to perceive you at work
in creation, the church, and our parish.
Fill our hearts with your love
that we may reach out in love to others.
Stir up our imagination with your Holy Spirit
that we may find new ways to live into life with you.
Give us a vision of your mission
that we may share your love and your spirit
in all the places where we work and play and worship you.
In Jesus' holy name, ***Amen.***

Prayer for Peace

BCP p. 815

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominion and glory, now and for ever. ***Amen.***

Closing Blessings

Dismissal

- Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.
- Thanks be to God, Alleluia, alleluia.