

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 1, 2018,

Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15; 2:23-24; Psalm 30; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43

Today's lessons from the Wisdom of Solomon and Mark address the meaning of life and death and the power of God. The book of the Wisdom of Solomon is part of the deuterocanonical books of the Holy Bible as it was written in the intertestamental times of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament between 200 BCE and 100 CE. During this period Greek Hellenistic thought pervaded even into the Jewish culture. The Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul, and had a dualistic understanding between good and evil, between God and evil. The Jewish people believed God created all that is and death is a reality of life. However, they believed that the righteous would live as they would be remembered.

So in our lesson for today, God is said not to create death, but it was the devil's envy through which death entered the world. The Wisdom of Solomon appropriated the dualism of Greek thought about God and death, but added that only the righteous would be immortal and live with God.

Our gospel lesson from Mark addresses the question of Jesus as Lord even over life and death. Last Sunday, Jesus and disciples made the journey over to the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was shown to be Lord over the winds and waves, thus the Lord of creation. The lesson we did not hear between last Sunday's lesson and today's is the story of the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac in which a legion of demons was cast out and the tormented man was made well. Jesus was shown to be Lord over the demonic.

So in today's gospel lesson Jesus and the disciples are greeted by a large crowd. It is thought that the man who had been healed of demon possession shared his good news, so people wanted to see Jesus and be healed. In this story, Jairus the leader of the local synagogue pleads with Jesus to lay his hands on her daughter that she might live. As the head of the local synagogue, Jairus is purported to be righteous and probably prosperous. It would be as if there was a new medical treatment which could cure cancer and the wealthy and respected would get in line first. Jesus does not reject Jairus because he is powerful. He accepts Jairus' plea out of compassion and because he has faith that Jesus could heal his daughter.

Along the way another person appears, a woman who had been ill for twelve years hemorrhaging. She had spent all her money trying to be healed, but still remained ill. Moreover, because she was hemorrhaging, she was considered unclean and an outcast. She was considered unrighteous because of her illness. Because of this she thinks to herself "if only I could touch his clothes, I will be made well." And she dared to do so, and was physically healed. But it was a private healing, and would not address her public status.

But Jesus felt "the energy" leave him, and wanted to know who "touched" him. So the unnamed woman told him what she did and what happened, and Jesus praised her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace, and be healed of your disease." Jesus made her healing which had already occurred to be not only private but public, so she could be restored to the community.

Ironically, although Jairus asked first for her daughter to be healed, the unnamed woman who suffered for twelve years was healed first. And so, Jesus' healing is also available to the unclean and outcast who has faith in him, as we as the righteous and respectable.

As they continued on and arrive at Jairus' home, the bad news was told them that his daughter had died. But Jesus said she is only "sleeping." So Jesus enters the room with her parents and his inner circle of Peter, James and John and calls on her to get up, and she does. And so Jesus is revealed as Lord over illness and even death.

What is common between the unnamed woman who was hemorrhaging for twelve years and Jairus was that both of them had faith in Jesus to heal them. Now this is not our common experience when someone we love is ill or near death. We may believe that Jesus can heal them, but when we pray for healing many times if not most people do not get well and eventually die. This does not mean that our faith in Jesus is not pure, or that God did not hear our prayers. And healing is not only about physical healing, it is also about restoring people to wholeness in our relationships. The man possessed by a legion of demons (Mark 5:1-20) was restored to himself and praised God. He no longer had to live apart from his family. The woman who was ill was restored to her relationships.

So we learn that Jesus had compassion on those who were hurting, and we too are called to have compassion on those who are hurting. In our lesson from 2 Corinthians 8:7-15, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church that should "excel also in this generous undertaking." This effort was one to help the saints in Jerusalem who were struggling. The people of Corinth could be considered to be similar to those of us who live near and around Silicon Valley. They were always interested in what was new and cutting edge. They were also well to do. The Corinthian Church had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior, but they did not understand that their salvation was not only for their personal good, but they too were called to care for others. They too were called to remember,

"The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have to little."

Last month as I told you I spoke to the Board of Supervisors of San Mateo to advocate for them to add to the legal defense fund for those in the process to be deported. I had been asked to go as part of the clergy group seeking to advocate for the undocumented in our community. The Rev. Anna Lange-Soto asked me to speak. I was not prepared to do so, as I felt I had not done enough. But I signed up and did speak very shortly. I said, "I cannot stand on any moral high ground asking the Board of Supervisors to act to support a legal defense fund, because I know that I have not done enough myself. But I still ask you to do so. Also, as my father and his family were interned during World War II, I realize that there were neighbors who acted on behalf of the Japanese Americans, and now I want to act to be a neighbor."

Yesterday, I went to the rally at the West County Detention Center in Richmond for a rally to support the undocumented who are imprisoned there. There is a rally every first Saturday of the month, and I had not gone before. Shelley Keefe had invited us to go, and I knew I needed to go. It so happened to be the same day when there was a nation-wide organization to protest the separation of children from their parents who have been seeking asylum, and so it was very crowded.

I heard a story of a woman whose husband was detained there, but had recently been relocated to Colorado with 14 others. The impact it had on her and her children was devastating, as they could not visit him. He also lost contact with those providing for his legal defense.

During the rally, the crowd was asked to donate for the defense of the detained, and to support the families. This is an example of Paul calling on the Corinthian Church to support the saints in Jerusalem. What is done to help someone in need will make a difference and be a witness to love of

God in Jesus. I invite you to think about those less fortunate than yourselves, and to ask yourselves how you will choose to help them.

Finally, to make the point that even a small act can make a difference, I want to tell you a story about yesterday. It was hot standing in the crowd, so Karen and I headed back to our car. We could not park close but had to walk several blocks along a small road called "Giant Road." There were no sidewalks, and people parked their cars on the road. And thus, we and other people were walking on the street. As cars were both leaving and entering, driving became difficult and then a large public bus could not enter, because an SUV was blocking the road. The bus driver waved at the woman driving the SUV to come out and pass by so the bus could enter, but instead she backed up, but could allow the bus or the other cars to pass. Seeing that they were not communicating I went up to the woman driving the SUV and told her the bus driver wants her to pass. But she didn't think she could pass. She was stuck. The bus driver who also was a woman yelled at her, and said, "This woman cannot drive." And the woman yelled backed. So I asked her to turn in her side mirror and guided her out. And I walked back to where Karen was.

This was a very small act to help two people. Ironically, people who came out to advocate for people being detained found it difficult to be civil to a bus driver.

So I invite you have your faith in Jesus as the one who heals the body, spirit and our relationships so we may be our best selves and be agents of the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

I propose to show that as the lessons address the meaning of life and death, the Gospel lesson teaches us that access to Jesus and the healing power of God to grant life in the face of death is open to all including the powerful and the lowly, and that we are called to do our part to be generous to share what we have both materially and spiritually with those who have less to contribute to the spread of God's love in Jesus.

The Collect

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The First Reading

Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15; 2:23-24

God did not make death,
And he does not delight in the death of the living.
For he created all things so that they might exist;
the generative forces of the world are wholesome,
and there is no destructive poison in them,

and the dominion of Hades is not on earth.
For righteousness is immortal.

God created us for incorruption,
and made us in the image of his own eternity,
but through the devil's envy death entered the world,
and those who belong to his company experience it.

The Response

Psalm 30

Exaltabo te, Domine

- 1 I will exalt you, O LORD,
because you have lifted me up *
and have not let my enemies triumph over me.
- 2 O LORD my God, I cried out to you, *
and you restored me to health.
- 3 You brought me up, O LORD, from the dead; *
you restored my life as I was going down to the grave.
- 4 Sing to the LORD, you servants of his; *
give thanks for the remembrance of his holiness.
- 5 For his wrath endures but the twinkling of an eye, *
his favor for a lifetime.
- 6 Weeping may spend the night, *
but joy comes in the morning.
- 7 While I felt secure, I said,
"I shall never be disturbed. *
You, LORD, with your favor, made me as strong as the mountains."
- 8 Then you hid your face, *
and I was filled with fear.
- 9 I cried to you, O LORD; *
I pleaded with the Lord, saying,
- 10 "What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the Pit? *
will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?"
- 11 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me; *
O LORD, be my helper."
- 12 You have turned my wailing into dancing; *
you have put off my sack-cloth and clothed me with joy.
- 13 Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing; *
O LORD my God, I will give you thanks for ever.

The Epistle

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

As you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you-- so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something-- now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has-- not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written,

“The one who had much did not have too much,
and the one who had little did not have too little.”

The Gospel

Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to

her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

In preparation for this coming Sunday’s worship, please pray this coming Sunday’s Collect of the Day and read and reflect on the lessons assigned as printed below

The Collect

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.*

Old Testament

Ezekiel 2:1-5

The Lord 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.

The Response

Psalm 123

Ad te levavi oculos meos

- 1 To you I lift up my eyes, *
to you enthroned in the heavens.
- 2 As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, *
and the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,
- 3 So our eyes look to the LORD our God, *
until he show us his mercy.
- 4 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy, *
for we have had more than enough of contempt,
- 5 Too much of the scorn of the indolent rich, *
and of the derision of the proud.

The Epistle

2 Corinthians 12:2-10

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.

The Gospel

Mark 6:1-13

Jesus 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.