**The First Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity Sunday, June 7, 2020, the Rev. Karen Swanson**

**Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Matthew 28:16-20**

We in the Episcopal Church have some quirky traditions that we love. We have obscure place names like the narthex that would be better understood by most as the foyer. Our top leaders wear tall flame shaped silk hats called miters that they wouldn’t be caught dead wearing outside the church. I am not sure if it is still true, but some time ago when I sang in the youth choir of my home church, it took FOREVER to button up our choir robes. When I grumbled about it one day, I was told that each robe had exactly 39 buttons to help us remember the 39 articles of faith that separate us from the Roman Catholic tradition. That was odd enough to distract me from my complaining, at least for that day. And of special interest for today is that according to the liturgical calendar of the Episcopal Church, you and I are now in ordinary time.

Ordinary time? Really? Does it feel like ordinary time to you? With mass protests for racial justice . . . an ever-increasing count of COVID-19 infections . . . unemployment . . . looting . . .. It feels like anything but ordinary time to me. My breath is taken away by some of the brave and extraordinary things that people have done. Some have spoken up about police brutality and bias at the risk of becoming its victims. Others have risked infection from COVID-19 to show solidarity with those asking for justice. Some have protected and served their communities in these dangerous times with empathy and understanding.

Ordinary times? Hardly. And yet, it seems to me that for we who are Christians, and especially Episcopalians, this is a time to live out our faith in what are ordinary ways for us. The Baptismal Covenant found in our Book of Common Prayer sets a high standard for us. We re-commit to it every time we have a baptism, and on four Sundays a year whether we have a baptism or not. We commit to striving for justice and peace among all people. We commit to respecting the dignity of every human being. We commit to seeking and serving Christ in all persons. We commit to loving our neighbors as ourselves. We commit to persevering in resisting evil. We commit to repenting and returning to the Lord whenever we fall into sin. We commit to proclaiming by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. We commit to all this. These commitments shape our lives as Episcopalian Christians. It is a lot. We could feel overwhelmed by these commitments. But, the key thing is this: we do not commit to do these things on our own. We promise to do these things in the context of prayer and worship **and with God’s help.**

With God’s help. This God who helps us is the one “from whom no secrets are hid.” This God who helps us is the one who knows the number of hairs on our head. This God who helps us loves us profoundly, and has paved the way for our forgiveness. This God who helps us is the Father who created the world and us with the Word, his Son, while the Holy Spirit hovered over the deep. This God who helps us is the one who was there at the beginning of time, and promises to be with us forever.

We are not alone. God is our companion and our strength. God will take the mustard seeds of our efforts, and multiply their impact. Most of us will not be heroes or heroines of this pandemic nor of the fight for racial justice. Perhaps this is not what God most needs from us. Maybe, instead, God needs us to be models of humility for our family, our friends, our colleagues and our faith community. Maybe God needs us to be people willing to acknowledge our need for God to do even the ordinary things we do. Maybe God needs us simply to confess our sins, to acknowledge that we have played a part in the sin of racism that has plagued our country since its inception, and to learn how to do better. Maybe we are called to repentance.

Our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, an African American man, preached at the National Cathedral on Pentecost. He spoke of the two pandemics plaguing our country. The first, of course, is the COVID-19 pandemic. The second he describes as a spiritual pandemic. He spoke about the need to take ourselves out of the center of our universe, to do battle with our personal selfishness in order to make room for others. Others known to us. Others unknown to us. Others in need. Others who are different that we are. The only effective weapon for this battle, he argues, is love, God’s love in us empowering us. With God’s help, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. This is an ordinary thing profoundly needed in our extraordinary times.

Sisters and brothers, in this time of viral and spiritual pandemic we are called to be ourselves, to live out our faith as best we can, with God’s help. Because we are ordinary humans, we will sometimes stumble and fall. We will make mistakes, put our feet in our mouths, maybe hurt another. In spite of that, we have hope for ourselves and the world because God is with us as He promised. He will multiply our efforts, and use the mustard seeds of our faith, to move mountains.

I would like to end with a story from the news that some of you may have heard. Jeff Brown is a grocer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His father, grandfather and great grandfather before him were also grocers. The family has always been committed to the people in the neighborhood. Jeff now owns and oversees twelve grocery stores. Six of them are in what would otherwise be food deserts, where other grocers are unwilling to invest. Ninety five per cent of John’s employees are African Americans from the local community. More than 25 per cent of them are formerly incarcerated people to whom he is giving a second chance. In his Shop Rite stores, Jeff includes a credit union office, a pharmacy and a health clinic to more fully meet the needs of his customers.

On two consecutive nights, one of Jeff’s grocery stores was looted. The second night, the looters drove a pick-up truck through the boarded-up entrance of the store where 15 employees were hard at work cleaning up the mess from the night before. The looters came in, and did extensive damage to the cash machines as well as other areas of the store. In fear for their lives, the employees escaped to the roof. They were later rescued by the fire department.

When it was all over, Mr. Brown was interviewed. He did not hesitate in his commitment. The grocery store would be re-opened. Business would go on as usual. Employees would come to work. People in the neighborhood would buy food, order prescriptions, take money out of the bank. The Browns would continue as grocers. Ordinary, yet inspirational things. Goodness in the midst of wrongdoing. Jeffrey Brown being himself, making room in the center of his life for others.

May we do the same, with God’s help.

**The Collect**

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**Old Testament**

**Genesis 1:1-2:4a**

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

**The Response**

**Psalm 8**

***Domine, Dominus noster***

1 O Lord our Governor, \*  
how exalted is your Name in all the world!

2 Out of the mouths of infants and children \*  
your majesty is praised above the heavens.

3 You have set up a stronghold against your adversaries, \*  
to quell the enemy and the avenger.

4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, \*  
the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,

5 What is man that you should be mindful of him? \*  
the son of man that you should seek him out?

6 You have made him but little lower than the angels; \*  
you adorn him with glory and honor;

7 You give him mastery over the works of your hands; \*  
you put all things under his feet:

8 All sheep and oxen, \*  
even the wild beasts of the field,

9 The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, \*  
and whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea.

10 O Lord our Governor, \*  
how exalted is your Name in all the world!

**The Epistle**

**2 Corinthians 13:11-13**

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

**The Gospel**

**Matthew 28:16-20**

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**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**

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**Old Testament**

**Exodus 19:2-8a**

The Israelites had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.”

So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. The people all answered as one: “Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do.”

**The Response**

**Psalm 100**

***Jubilate Deo***

1 Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; \*  
serve the Lord with gladness  
and come before his presence with a song.

2 Know this: The Lord himself is God; \*  
he himself has made us, and we are his;  
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

3 Enter his gates with thanksgiving;  
go into his courts with praise; \*  
give thanks to him and call upon his Name.

4 For the Lord is good;  
his mercy is everlasting; \*  
and his faithfulness endures from age to age.

**The Epistle**

**Romans 5:1-8**

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person-- though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

**The Gospel**

**Matthew 9:35-10:8(9-23)**

Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. [Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

“See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”]