**The Second Sunday after Pentecost, June 14, 2020, the Rev. David Ota**

**Exodus 19:2-8a; Psalm 100; Romans 5:1-8; Matthew 9:35-10:23**

Good morning saints! During these days of pandemic, and our growing awareness of systemic racism in our nation and the world, what are we as Christians called to be and do? It is a complicated question without simple answers.

In our Collect for today we pray that God will keep God’s “household the Church in God’s steadfast faith and love, that through God’s grace we may proclaim God’s truth with boldness, and minister God’s justice with compassion.” In other words, we Christians are a community, a family among the families of the world who find our identity in God’s constant faith and love. And second, by the grace of God we are called to proclaim God’s truth, and minister God’s justice with compassion and mercy.

The call to remember that we are supported by God’s steadfast faith and love is found in Paul’s letter to the Romans for today, “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.” (Romans 5:5-6)

However, as a community of faith, as the church grounded in God’s love for all the message and actions will be different for all of us. In regards to the pandemic, all of us are called to care for those in our circles of relationships. Given our means we are to protect the most vulnerable among us, but we must not stop at our closest circles. For example, Karen and I are going up to care for my mother on a daily basis, as she needs our help.

After we care for our families, we are to look beyond and see who else could use our help. During this time of pandemic, it may be only sending financial help, as I have asked you to send assistance to the Episcopal Church in Navajoland. Thank you for what you have been able to do and send. But not everyone is in a situation in which they could send money. Our personal circumstances differ. Some of you who are younger and in good health can go out and help others with essential tasks.

Of course, we are also called to pray for others and in so doing raise our own awareness of the suffering around us. This is what Jesus asked the disciples to do, “to pray to the Lord of the harvest in sending out laborers into the harvest.” (Matthew 9:38) By praying to the LORD their God, some felt the call to serve.

When we consider the protests against systemic racism and the brutality of some of the police against black and brown people, we must acknowledge that we have either been unaware or indifferent of these realities.

It seems as if the video of the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis raised the awareness of the world to this ongoing nightmare. There really is brutality against black men and women. It is something that cannot be denied. And I must admit, we all knew about it, but kept it hidden in the recesses of our awareness. For example, we know the stories of the Negro Leagues in baseball, and how Jackie Robinson became the first to join the National League. We know of the abuse he and other black men faced and endured. But somehow, we may have wished and imagined that it was all behind us. But now we know that is not true. Although there may be progress, black people are still harassed for being black.

I am coming to the opinion that because we actually viewed the killing, we could not ignore it. We have heard reports of the police killing citizens who happened to be black or brown, but did not see how it happened, and so we could ignore it.

The other day I was listening to the radio and heard an ethicist comment on how each one of us would address a wrong that is in front of us, but could easily ignore a wrong that we may know about, but is out of sight. He gave the example of a man approaching a pond, and he saw a young boy flailing in the water. He looked around and saw no one else to help him. So, he went in to save the boy. But the man could have said that it wasn’t his responsibility and continued to walk on by as the Pharisee and Rabbi pass by on the other side of the road when they saw a man left on the road for dead.

But the ethicist continued to say that when he heard of starvation in Bangladesh years ago, he decided that he would give a percentage of his income for relief. And over time as his means grew, he gave a higher percentage. He did not need to see the people suffering. He knew the need was great.

In a sense, we as a people know that some of our neighbors live under a form of racial oppression daily. And because we are not experiencing it ourselves, we can easily put it out of our minds, until something like the George Floyd killing is videotaped.

So once our awareness has been raised, what are we to do as Christian people? We are to proclaim that the reign of God is near and to value the under-valued person as God’s child, and to call the ones hurting others to account, and to remind them that they too are called to be God’s child and not to act in such a way. We are to call for societal change, what the church would call societal repentance. We need to confess our own complicity with injustice done to others in our name as citizens of this nation.

And for ourselves, we are to no longer live with the illusion that we are not our brother’s or sister’s keeper. Rather we are called to be God’s servants and to examine our lives and to question whether we have been indifferent to the sufferings of those out of sight. And if that is the case, then what can we do?

Perhaps, the first thing we must do is to examine our own hearts and lives. How has your experiences with people different from yourself, with those in authority such as the police affected you? Has your experience of violence made you stereotyped a certain group of people? Can you still see the others as children of God? Can we still proclaim the reign of God has come near when violence is involved?

Once you know yourself a little better when it comes to race relations, confess your own sin and repent. Acknowledge how your negative experience has somehow made you categorize a group of people as dangerous, and confess it to God. And ask God to help you to view each person as a child of God worthy of God’s love. In this way you will be able to proclaim God’s truth that although all of us fall short of the glory of God, we are still God’s beloved ones, and are called to act like beloved ones. And then we can minister God’s justice with compassion and mercy. Amen.

**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 9:35-10:23**

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.”

**I propose to show that as Christians in the midst of pandemic, racism and climate change we are called to proclaim by word and deed that the reign of God has come near, but the message will be different for each of us.**

**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 Lord, make us have perpetual love and reverence for your holy Name, for you never fail to help and govern those whom you have set upon the sure foundation of your loving­kindness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**Old Testament**

**Genesis 21:8-21**

The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.” The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.” So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, “Do not let me look on the death of the child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.” Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

**The Response**

**Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17**

***Inclina, Domine***

1 Bow down your ear, O Lord, and answer me, \*
for I am poor and in misery.

2 Keep watch over my life, for I am faithful; \*
save your servant who puts his trust in you.

3 Be merciful to me, O Lord, for you are my God; \*
I call upon you all the day long.

4 Gladden the soul of your servant, \*
for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

5 For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, \*
and great is your love toward all who call upon you.

6 Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer, \*
and attend to the voice of my supplications.

7 In the time of my trouble I will call upon you, \*
for you will answer me.

8 Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord, \*
nor anything like your works.

9 All nations you have made will come and worship you, O Lord, \*
and glorify your Name.

10 For you are great;
you do wondrous things; \*
and you alone are God.

16 Turn to me and have mercy upon me; \*
give your strength to your servant;
and save the child of your handmaid.

17 Show me a sign of your favor,
so that those who hate me may see it and be ashamed; \*
because you, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

***or***

**Old Testament**

**Jeremiah 20:7-13**

O Lord, you have enticed me,
and I was enticed;

you have overpowered me,
and you have prevailed.

I have become a laughingstock all day long;
everyone mocks me.

For whenever I speak, I must cry out,
I must shout, "Violence and destruction!"

For the word of the Lord has become for me
a reproach and derision all day long.

If I say, "I will not mention him,
or speak any more in his name,"

then within me there is something like a burning fire
shut up in my bones;

I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot.

For I hear many whispering:
"Terror is all around!

Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"
All my close friends
are watching for me to stumble.

"Perhaps he can be enticed,
and we can prevail against him,
and take our revenge on him."

But the Lord is with me like a dread warrior;
therefore my persecutors will stumble,
and they will not prevail.

They will be greatly shamed,
for they will not succeed.

Their eternal dishonor
will never be forgotten.

O Lord of hosts, you test the righteous,
you see the heart and the mind;

let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed my cause.

Sing to the Lord;
praise the Lord!

For he has delivered the life of the needy
from the hands of evildoers.

**The Response**

**Psalm 69: 8-11, (12-17), 18-20**

***Salvum me fac***

8 Surely, for your sake have I suffered reproach, \*
and shame has covered my face.

9 I have become a stranger to my own kindred, \*
an alien to my mother's children.

10 Zeal for your house has eaten me up; \*
the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.

11 I humbled myself with fasting, \*
but that was turned to my reproach.

[12 I put on sack-cloth also, \*
and became a byword among them.

13 Those who sit at the gate murmur against me, \*
and the drunkards make songs about me.

14 But as for me, this is my prayer to you, \*
at the time you have set, O Lord:

15 "In your great mercy, O God, \*
answer me with your unfailing help.

16 Save me from the mire; do not let me sink; \*
let me be rescued from those who hate me
and out of the deep waters.

17 Let not the torrent of waters wash over me,
neither let the deep swallow me up; \*
do not let the Pit shut its mouth upon me.]

18 Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind; \*
in your great compassion, turn to me.'

19 "Hide not your face from your servant; \*
be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.

20 Draw near to me and redeem me; \*
because of my enemies deliver me.

**The Epistle**

**Romans 6:1b-11**

Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**The Gospel**

**Matthew 10:24-39**

Jesus said to the twelve disciples, “A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”