

“Come to me, all you that are weary... and I will give you rest”

- To those of you here sitting in the pews, Welcome back.
- And to those of you online at home, Hello again
- Today marks the first Eucharist at this altar since March 15, except for Maundy Thursday via Zoom
- Almost four months without the regular, weekly Sacrament: the reminder of God’s grace and presence in our lives
- It has been a hole in my heart- something that in some ways I can articulate,
- But in other ways is beyond even my understanding of just how much this weekly rhythm was missed, and the impacts of losing that tether
- While all of the planning and cleaning and preparation for this return has been great indeed, and not just a little anxiety producing
- As I stand here I feel a great deal of comfort and relief.
- I assure you, those of you at home can also participate in that, as you will get to hear and participate in the familiar prayers
- And as our BCP on page 457 reassures all of us:
 - That "if a person desires to receive the Sacrament, but by reason of extreme sickness or physical ability, ...is unable,
 - I am to assure each of you that all the benefits of Communion are received, even if not with the mouth
 - Bishop Lee has reminded all of us clergy repeatedly that this Pandemic qualifies
- Today all of us will participate, in one way or the other, in this great mystery in which Christ is present with us in Eucharist
- Fun little aside: the Protestants say this meal is simply remembering Jesus’ time with his disciples and the Last Supper
- Catholics embrace the doctrine of Transubstantiation, in which the bread and wine, even though they still seem to be bread and wine
 - Actually in their essence beneath the surface turn into body and blood so that Jesus is physically here with us.
- What does the Anglican Church say?

- “It’s a Mystery.”¹
- We believe Christ is really present in this bread, and really present to you at a distance when you are unable to physically be here but desire it
- But we stop short of trying to explain how it happens.
- And yet it does. In a very real and very powerful way, the mystery of the bread and wine holding Christ’s very presence is here again.
- It is a source of sustenance
- It is a source of grace, and of transformation
- It is a source of comfort
- Jesus says, “Come to me, all you that are weary... and I will give you rest”
- Some of that respite is found here today, in this room and through that live stream
- If you are like me, you need it badly these days, that sacramental comfort and strength and ritual
- As we seem to watch as the fabric of our society and country is being unmade and reconnected in new ways
- As I prepared this week for the sermon, I had the amazing chance to join a virtual spiritual retreat on Wednesday with the Jesuits at Bellarmine
 - The topic was Hope- Christian hope
 - I heard it as a call to me to remember, even when it gets harder to do so, that our hope as Christians surpasses the events in our lives and world
 - Our hope has deeper roots than the unrest we see, the disappointments we experience
 - The COVID depression and anxiety
 - I felt that nudge that preachers sometimes get... the Spirit whispering, this is what you need preach out this week, Jesse
 - Preach hope, preach comfort, preach grace
 - The good news of Jesus Christ goes beyond and deeper than even our own sin and misdoings.
- We are reading from Romans this morning, and Paul is writing around 55 BCE²
 - But he could just as easily be writing today
 - He says it about as well as anyone could:
 - “For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real_presence_of_Christ_in_the_Eucharist#Anglican

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Romans#Authorship_and_dating

- Paul is asking us to take a really hard look at sin.
- Not just the misdeeds we do, things done and left undone
- But larger systems of sin and evil that form from our collective decisions, and do serious harm
- Or in this case, all of the things that are very present in our world today
- Although these verses here are written in the first person, Paul is not talking about his own personal struggles necessarily
- But is voicing this as all humankind
- As Adam³ or Eve, representing us all
- Paul is discussing a universal human experience, of the struggle that goes on within us
- The desire to do good being co-opted by the forces of sin around us until we do not do that good
- Or worse, even believe that the evil we are doing is actually for the good
- Sinful systems are vicious that way, seeping into everything to stay in place
- Even Jesus points to the double standards, the inequalities in his world, when he talks to the disciples this morning
- For John the Baptist- they said he had a demon because he did not eat or drink
- For the Son of Man, he ate and drink and they accused him of gluttony and being a drunkard
- What better passages are there to describe some of the world in which we are living
 - When the truth and the narrative gets bent to serve the one speaking
 - While love, justice, and mercy seem to be the victims in our post-truth world
 - When each of us is encountering our own racism- and yes, we all must encounter our own racism-
 - It is not easy to see the truth about ourselves, and even harder to change it
 - We do not understand our own actions at times, and when we want to do good and right,
 - There seems to be another thing inside of us like Paul is describing that seems to pull us down into another way all together
 - As Paul says, there are times we feel captive to the way things are.
 - It gets harder to have hope, to feel grace, to received God's comfort

³ Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary. Marion Soards, ed., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992) 67

- Today, as the world spins around us
 - As we see evil and injustice exposed through the lenses of smart phones
 - As we struggle inside between doing good and yet somehow not doing what we really want
 - As we are weary from carrying the heavy burdens that Jesus speaks of in the Gospel today
 - I want to invite you for just a moment this morning to lay it all down at this altar
 - I want you to come here, virtually and physically, to bring those burdens, stresses, and anxieties, and place them before Jesus
 - And most importantly, I want you to bring yourselves, your whole selves, sin and all
 - Step back for just this hour from the social media war you are waging online
 - Step back for just this hour from the turmoil of political debate, and the steady stream of news from our preferred sources
 - Step back from the anxiety of COVID-19 and the escalating numbers in our country
 - Step back from the unrest that is in our streets and in our homes- just for this hour
 - Let down your guard and open your hearts here.
 - Come to this altar, in person or through the screen
 - Partake of this communion, in the wafer and in the spirit
 - Grant yourself the permission to spend a contented moment with God, to receive the grace and the comfort offered here.
 - Take in the breath- the breath God gave us when we were created.
 - Jesus says, Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens... and I will give you rest
 - Be nourished here with this food at this table
 - Can you take a moment this morning to breathe in deeply the grace and comfort Jesus is offering you this morning?
 - Can you feel the Spirit's movement in your life right now, the stirrings that come from that deep place: that was and is and is to come
 - Can we let down our guard and open our hearts to that life-giving spirit to renewed, recharged
 - And sent out to continue our work for the Kingdom of God.
 - We re-engage with the fight for justice and equality, the respect for every human being

- We reengage in our political process to help, with our voice and vote, create country that holds true to God's values of others
- And we return to this moment for comfort and strength.
- Jesus says, take my yoke upon you, learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,
- Accept the peace and rest that is offered here today
- Tap into the deep, those stirrings of the Spirit that moves in your soul beneath the storms that rage
- Remember to whom you belong, your beginning and your ending
- And breathe deeply from that place
- Jesus says, Come to me, all you that are weary... and I will give you rest.

Amen.