



Tacoma, Washington

Household Worship
The Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, October 25, 2020

More than thoughts and prayers

It's good to remember that the texts of the New Testament were written in Greek, not in Aramaic, the language of Jesus, and certainly not in English. We English speakers are at least two steps removed linguistically from the original sayings of Jesus – which is probably why priests and pastors are required to take at least one course in Greek and one in Hebrew with the expectation that they will read the Bible in its original languages before they ever think about writing a sermon or homily. Words matter and the meaning of words in their original language can matter even more.

In Greek, the word much spoken by Christians – *love* – has more than one meaning. Love as **eros** describes the attraction of one to another and the frequently libidinal urges such attraction inspires. We may know that such an attraction and the sense of infatuation it can evoke is a chemical reaction that can last no more than ten to twelve weeks. Alas, our bodies just can't sustain all that much heightened chemical activity. No one has a monopoly on erotic love and one should receive with skepticism any claim that love is "free" of erotic flavoring.



For many people, love as *eros* can actually develop into love as **philia**, love as friendship: thus, Philadelphia, *phileo* + *adelphos*, sibling friendship or friendship between two people or more. For the puritanical soul anxious about the frequently uncontrolled and sensuous dimension of

eros, *philia* can be a "purer," more respectable kind of love: the lusty poetry of the Song of Songs is traded in for the call found in some New Testament epistles to be "respectable, temperate, and restrained" in one's relationships with others. This not to say that friendship has to be "temperate" or "restrained" or that *eros* needs control. Rather, friendship is a good from which we all benefit.

After all, doesn't the world need much more friendship, friendship as loving respect for the other?

There is, however, a third kind of love spoken of in the New Testament and in the gospel reading for today: love as **agape**. When Jesus links two commands as one and says that the lawyer, an expert in the Law of Moses, is called to love God and love his neighbor as himself, the Greek reads *agapeseis: love as action that benefits others*. Not love as a erotic attraction or the friendship one might take for granted; not love as pleasant thought or sweet feeling; and not love as prayer that fails to lead to service – but love as action that benefits others, that moves one into something larger, that something larger being the work of God in Christ to transform this frequently loveless and merciless world into what it was intended to be. The Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church, Michael Curry, said it this way in a wedding sermon preached before the world at Windsor Chapel:

*Imagine this tired old world where love is the way:
When love is unselfish, sacrificial, and thus redemptive.
When love is the way, then no child will go to bed hungry in this world ever again.
When love is the way, justice will roll down like a mighty stream and righteousness like an ever-flowing brook.
When love is the way, poverty will become history.
When love is the way, the earth will be a sanctuary.
When love is the way, we know that God is the source of us all,
and we are brothers and sisters, children of God.*

Preparation in Autumn

We are at the end of the Autumn season and will soon enter November and the Last Things. Household worship can take place anywhere but it is most appropriate at a **table**: a kitchen or dining table. As temperatures cool, would this not be a good time to create a **home altar** for daily and Sunday worship? The color appointed for this season is **green**. It is always appropriate to have a **candle** burning during household prayer: who among us does not need more of the light of Christ in our lives? And this, too: a **bowl of water** in which one can dip one's fingers and make the sign of the cross over the forehead or heart in renewal of one's baptism into the evergreen life of God. If you have access to a garden or evergreen trees, let **flowers** and **branches** mark your place of household prayer. Anglican spirituality holds that *all the senses* can disclose God's presence – not just texts for speaking or singing. Do you have **incense**? Then burn it as you pray, letting your prayer rise with the fragrant smoke. Should you have a **crucifix**, a **cross**, or an **image of Christ**, let this holy artifact be present to focus your prayer.

If a link in this service is not live on your device, copy it and paste it into your browser.



Acclamation

*Make the sign of the cross as you say,
Blessed (+) be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
And blessed be God's kingdom, now and forever. Amen*

Collect

Father of the poor and Mother of the hungry,
you planted us by living water,
that we might be rooted in righteousness.
Assured of your love,
help us to cast aside all fear,
that we may love our neighbors as ourselves
and serve them in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Word of God for the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel is the primary reading of the day and should always be read. It follows after a reading from the Hebrew Scriptures, a Psalm, and a reading from the early church. The first three scripture texts can be found here:

http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearA_RCL/Pentecost/AProp25_RCL.html

Leviticus 19:1-2,15-18

Psalm 1

Listen as the Choir of Wells Cathedral sings the appointed psalm

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3H2Pp-Rs94I&feature=emb_logo

BLESSED is the one that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor stood in the way of sinners and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful.

But whose delight is in the law of the Lord: and in this law dwells day and night.

This one shall be like a tree planted by the waterside:
that will bring forth fruit in due season,

Whose leaf also shall not wither:
and look, whatsoever that one doeth, it shall prosper.

As for the ungodly, it is not so with them: but they are like the chaff,
which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth.

Therefore the ungodly shall not be able to stand in the judgment:
neither the sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

But the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous:
and the way of the ungodly shall perish.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Matthew 22:34-46

Read the Gospel aloud slowly.

The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew.
Glory to you, Lord Christ.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?"

No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Christ.

A reflection on the gospel reading by Melissa Musick Nussbaum

Melissa Nussbaum is a mother, author, and teacher. Among her many works, she has published two remarkable reflections on life in the home through the lens of Morning Prayer and Compline: I Will Arise This Day and I Will Lie Down This Night (Liturgy Training Publications, 1996, 1995).

"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." We can imagine the crowd listening to Jesus and nodding in approval. Who doesn't understand that gods demand such all-encompassing love? But Jesus continues to surprise them, and us. He says the second commandment

“is like” this “greatest and first commandment.” It is the commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus takes God’s words to the Israelites – “You shall not wrong any widow or orphan” – and helps us to see that an offense against the poor and helpless is an offense against God.



Who is this God, concerned that the neighbor who has given his only cloak as collateral for a loan has nothing else for cover in the cold? Who is this God, linking our welcome of the alien with our duty of love to God? Who is this God, bending down from heaven to hear the cry of the oppressed and the molested? This is the God revealed in Christ Jesus the Son, who says, “The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

Jesus links love of God with love of neighbor in such a way that the two commandments cannot be severed. *Love of neighbor that is not rooted in love of God will find roots in something less, often in the desire that the rescued worship the rescuer.* And love of God that does not manifest in love of neighbor will manifest in empty rites, untethered to the world God made and tends and acts to save.

Prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need

These intercessions may be used, adding others in each household

Throughout the globe the church continues to pray and serve: though our common song is quieted, we hear the melody of your presence in cantors and choirs, and though apart, the Body of Christ continues to serve the neighbor in need. That you will continue to inspire all the baptized in witness and service to Christ, we pray to you, O God.

In your mercy, hear our prayers and save us.

Around us nature is strained: polar ice is melting, excessive rains ravage the land, fires consume forests, fields, and homes, and animals are deprived of habitat. That you will preserve and protect the earth, we pray to you, mighty God:

In your mercy, hear our prayers and save us.

Around us we see a needy world: governments allow injustice, violence threatens stability, people experience prejudice, reforms are thwarted, workers are unemployed, and medical facilities are strained. That you will save the people of the earth, we pray to you, compassionate God:

In your mercy, hear our prayers and save us.

In our nation's courts, we see justice delayed and justice denied. As we come to an election, we see voters suppressed and ballots gone missing. That you will uphold honest judges and thwart those who would deprive the people of their sacred vote, we pray to you, righteous God:

In your mercy, hear our prayers and save us.

Around us are the sick: there is hunger, the virus continues, many lack medical care, our neighbors and friends are ill. That you will bless all ministries of care and will relieve the suffering of those who are ill in body, mind, or spirit, we pray to you, merciful God.

In your mercy, hear our prayers and save us.



We give you thanks for the lives and for the witness of the faithful departed who loved and served their neighbors in the name of Christ [speak their names aloud]. That we, too, may confess Jesus Christ as Lord through our actions and at last join the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Simon and St. Jude, and all the saints at the great banquet of heaven, we pray to you, eternal God.

In your mercy, hear our prayers and save us.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Savior has taught, we are bold to say,

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
Your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

Concluding Collect

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Blessing

The LORD bless you and keep you.
The LORD's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The LORD look upon you with favor and (+) give you peace.
Amen.

Thanksgiving at Table

Use this thanksgiving prayer whenever you have a meal this week

All eyes look to you, O God,
and you give them their food in due season.
You open wide your hand
and feed every living thing.

Give us grateful hearts, Great Provider, for all your mercies,
and make us ever mindful of the needs of others;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Notes

Reflection: "More than thoughts and prayers," Fr. Samuel Torvend

Image: Courtesy of Friends Committee on National Legislation, 2020

Opening acclamation: *The Book of Common Prayer, 1979*

Collect: *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* (Nashville: Consultation on Common Texts, 2002; administered by Augsburg Fortress Publishers)

Biblical readings: *The New Revised Common Lectionary* adapted for Episcopal Use, 2006

Psalm 1: Anglican Chant sung by Wells Cathedral, Director: Anthony Crossland, Organist: Christopher Brayne; 1990, courtesy of Orchard Enterprises

Gospel reading: *New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible* (Washington, DC: The National Council of Churches, 1989)

Meditation on the Gospel: Melissa Musick Nussbaum, "Who is this God?" in *Give Us This Day, October 2020* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2020)

Photograph: National Catholic Reporter, 2019

Prayers: ELCA Worship in the Household 2020, with revisions

Image: "Saints Simon and Jude," Simone Martini, 1320

Lord's Prayer: *The Book of Common Prayer, 1979*

Concluding Prayer: *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* (Nashville: Consultation on Common Texts, 2002; administered by Augsburg Fortress Publishers)

Blessing: *The Book of Common Prayer, 1979*

Thanksgiving at Table: Psalm 104 and *The Book of Common Prayer, 1979*

Photograph: San Antonio Observer, May 2, 2020