

Simple Prayer, Simple Praise:
A Worship Service for Sunday, August 23, 2020

Opening Acclamation: (Isaiah 51:1-6)

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD.
Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.
Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you;
 for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.
For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places,
 and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD;
joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew 16:13-20

When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.



Meditation (by *The Rev. Ann Markle, Rector, Trinity Church, Lancaster*)

Peter's confession: a lucky draw of meditations for me. "Who do you say that I am?" I've been thinking all week about Karen Armstrong's discussion of the word "credo," "I believe." She made a parallel between the word "credere", to believe, and "cardio," heart. She suggested that saying "I believe" had less to do with full intellectual agreement and assent, than an emotional decision, more like "here is where I plant my heart." Now, I'm not a lexicographer; I can't speak at all to the accuracy of any connection between the words "credo" and "cardio" – I suspect there isn't one. But as someone who struggles with various parts of the Nicene Creed from time to time, I love the thought of "Here is where I plant my heart." No matter what I'm currently wrestling with, where I can or can not give my intellectual assent, my heart is always planted with Jesus, and with the Church that embraces the Creed that we recite every Sunday.

I suspect that's not so different from Peter. We know his intellectual belief in Jesus as Messiah wavered, often, usually depending on his level of fear (walking to Jesus on the windy Seas of Galilee, during the capture and trial of Jesus). But over and over again, we know where he planted his heart. It was with Jesus; this passage is just one example of it. We know how flawed and inconstant and doubting Peter could be, and yet Jesus still called him "Cephas," the rock. Jesus knew Peter's heart, and he knows ours. He knows just how inconstant and doubting we can be, but he doesn't really care so much about all that, as about where we plant and pledge our hearts.

So what'll it be for us? Who do we say that he is? Intellectually, I suspect it might be different things at different times: God, great teacher, one with the Father, whatever. But where will we plant our hearts? Who do we really say that he is? Who are we going to follow, in the end?



Prayer:

Almighty God, ground us in our love for you that we may build a church that shares your love with everyone we meet. Blessed Jesus, dwell in us that in faith we can lay the cornerstone of justice which is the heart of every work we undertake in your name. Powerful Spirit, visit us in

*grace and truth that every mission we construct with our hands is an invitation to your life-changing presence. Creator of all people and all good things, remind us that our Christian witness is nothing if it lacks provision for the poor, the homeless, the hungry, the abused, the oppressed, and the outcast, and grant us the compassionate ability to see your face in all we serve; this we ask in Jesus' name, **Amen.***

Take a moment now for silent reflection. Think of the people and things that cause you worry or concern; think of the things for which you are grateful. Raise them up in prayer using the words our Savior Christ taught us:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Grace: (based on Romans 12:1-8)

*By the mercies of God, I present my own body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is my spiritual worship. Allow it not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of my mind, so I may discern that which is the will of God—that which is good and acceptable and perfect. I vow to remember that this one body is comprised of many members, and we many, are one body in Christ. As our members have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, I pledge to open my heart to the gifts of prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, diligence, and compassion; accepting these in cheerfulness and thanksgiving. **Amen.***

Take a moments and think about how you are empowered to witness God's power in your own ministry and vocation. Pray for all who are dependent upon the ministries your region's congregations support: food pantries, clothing ministries, feeding programs, and social justice work.

Each Sunday at 10 a.m., Bishop Sean and other leaders from WNY and NWPA will lead worship via the Zoom platform. Anyone can join the service via phone by calling **646-876-9923 use code 127336938#**. Those wishing to join by instead of video can use this link: <https://zoom.us/j/127336938> If you are asked for a password, use **lakeerie**.

Simple Prayer, Simple Praise is produced for The Episcopal Dioceses of NWPA and WNY by the Rev. Steve Lane and the Rev. Claudia Sceda, and guest contributors as noted. August 2020.