



# Church of the Epiphany

## FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Pentecost 25 • Cloudcroft, New Mexico • November 10, 2024



### Pentecost 25, Proper 27

O God, whose blessed Son came into the world that he might destroy the works of the devil and make us children of God and heirs of eternal life: Grant that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that, when he comes again with power and great glory, we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Readings for Pentecost 25

- 1 Kings 17:8-16
- Psalm 146
- Hebrews 9:24-28
- Mark 12:38-44

Good morning! This week our Anglican Diocese of the Southwest will meet in its annual Synod. You may recall that last year, Synod 2023 met in our own backyard, at Sacramento Assembly, so we could commute each day. This year's meeting is down south of the border, in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. I understand there is a delightful Anglican church there. Puerto Vallarta is a coastal community with a diverse winter population, kind of like we are a mountain community with a diverse summer population. Please pray for the Synod, as everyone there will be praying for each and every church in the Diocese. Our delegation will not be traveling to Mexico. We will be participating via Zoom, as best we can.

Of course, many of us are more concerned with church affairs at the local level. Nowadays we see a different denomination church on almost every street corner, so it may be that we are not showing the world a model of unity. Even though the Holy Scriptures remain unchanged, and Jesus Christ is still the same yesterday, today, and forever, that may not be what people see at first glance. They may be wondering if the same message is being presented in all these different churches, and if it is not, how can they find truth in any form.

Even so, change *is* part of life as we know it, and we need to continue to learn. We need to continue to be open to the Holy Spirit and how He would have us grow and mature. We need to continue to study and to mine the Scriptures in order to extract all of what God has provided for us. Often when we dig into our

Sunday lessons, we find that there are surprising, sometimes even revolutionary, things going on. In today's reading from the Letter to the Hebrews, the author was explaining how much superior the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross was than all the sacrifices previously offered in the Temple, even in the Holy of Holies. Remember that the Temple in Jerusalem was the center of everything that was anything for the Old Testament Jews, and the Holy of Holies was the center of the center. But as we learn in the Letter to the Hebrews, the Jewish Temple no longer had any real purpose. Jesus had done far more, and had done it much, much better, than the Temple ever had. Think about how revolutionary this and other parts of Jesus' teaching must have sounded to the First Century Jews. When we look from that perspective, it is not so surprising that the response Jesus got from the religious leadership of His day was outrage - angry shouts of "Blasphemy!" We know that those shouts grew progressively louder, and then He was crucified.

On the other hand, from where we sit and with what we know now, our reaction is often shock at how short-sighted the Jewish leadership was. When **we** read the writings of the OT prophets, our impression is that the Jews of Jesus' time, who were familiar with the same prophecy, shouldn't have been so surprised at what Jesus taught. For example, we struggle to understand why they had so much trouble accepting foreigners. Consider today's OT lesson from the First Book of Kings. In that reading we learned that the prophet Elijah was told by God to relocate to Zarephath in Sidon. This area was not part of the Jewish nation, in fact, it was a center of Ba'al worship. And Elijah was even sent to a widow! Widows were not of any importance in those days - they were only there to be taken care of. Yet the widow obeyed the words of the prophet Elijah without question, verse 15, "And she went and did as Elijah said." Remember what came next, verse 16, "The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah." And there is more to it that we did

not read today. This story of Elijah's ministry to a foreign widow was one that Jesus used as an illustration to try to help the Jewish leaders understand the breadth of God's love for all peoples. You probably remember hearing that Gospel passage -you can look it up in Luke, chapter 4, vv. 25-26, as part of your homework, and consider the context. But the people who heard Jesus tell the story were outraged that Jesus used their own history to demonstrate the universality of His ministry, a ministry to all the peoples of the world, Jew and Gentile alike. They did not want to hear that. Apparently, they did not recall the promise to Abraham that he would be the Father of many nations. They simply could not comprehend God's ultimate purpose for the chosen people, that they were chosen to be His instrument in bringing salvation to the entire world. They preferred to keep God to themselves forever.

And keep in mind that stories such as this one tend to balance some other parts of the Old Testament that seem to support the idea of Jewish exclusivism. Remember at one point the ancient Jews were told not to intermarry with the surrounding peoples when they entered the Promised Land. And later, in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jewish men were told to divorce their foreign wives and have nothing to do with them. This took place as the people were returning from exile, and restoration of their original purity was a major theme. So how do we reconcile what appear to be conflicting teachings? Such struggles are really not new for us - Anglicans hold lots of things in tension. This is just one example. Often holding things, especially seemingly opposite teachings, in tension is not a comfortable place to be. Yet it is a place where we can be most open to seeing how God works with all kinds of people in all kinds of situations.

Now let us turn to today's Gospel reading. Another widow is a key figure in this passage. It is the story of the "widow's mite," and it is a favorite reading for stewardship Sunday. After

all, it is about giving until it hurts. We all struggle with money issues - Jesus talked far more about our relationship with money than with a lot of other things, and we need to hear what He is saying. In our culture, people in the Church often vote first with their checkbook. If they do or don't like what is going on with the Sunday worship, you often see it first in the collection plate. But the widow in the Gospel story wasn't at all like that. Recall the beginning of today's Gospel. Jesus told about how the scribes were putting on a show for everyone around them, long robes, best seats, places of honor. And what does Jesus tell us they were really doing behind the scenes? Mark chapter 12, v. 40, "They devour widows' houses." Remember that part? They were supposed to be taking care of the widows, but instead they were ripping them off. Now this leads right into Jesus telling them how the widow contributed all her living to the treasury. She may have even been a victim of the corruption among the leadership that had devoured her house, yet she knew that the problem was with the leadership, not with the Temple and certainly not with God. There is no reason to believe that she was simply ignorant. She just didn't vote with her wallet, she didn't hold anything back. She was as obedient as the widow in Zarephath. Both widows had been destitute, but they both put God first in their lives, despite whatever else was going on around them.

In looking at the big picture, however, perhaps the most radical, revolutionary change that Jesus brought to the Old Testament Jews was the teaching that salvation is by grace rather than through obedience to the Law of Moses. Again, it may be that it was not so much that the new teaching that was too radical, but that those hearing His message had become so entrenched in their own misunderstanding and the traditions they had built thereon. They had become so accustomed to hearing "Thou shalt not" that they no longer recognized the voice declaring "I am." Indeed, we still struggle today with false teaching about what we often call "works righteousness." It is still easy for us to be so concerned about what we do that we neglect the centrality of what Jesus

has already done for us.

Brothers and sisters, we all deplore sin, however defined. We deplore conflicts within or without the Church at any level. No one knows what God will bring out of what we may see as disaster, but somehow He will be glorified. He brought Solomon out of the union between David and Bathsheba, after their first child died as a consequence of David's sin. God told His people to remain pure and holy, yet there was at least one foreign woman in Jesus' blood line. Somehow when God is dealing with lemons, He manages to make the best lemonade. He can do that with each and every one of us. He is still in charge, and we don't need to take it upon ourselves to be deciding things for Him. There is nothing in Scripture about everyone agreeing with your personal preferences or your political agenda. Adjusting to the new administration in Washington will be difficult for a lot of people, many of them our brothers and sisters in Christ. But with God's help, we can learn to walk together. So let us all commit to praying that God may continue to guide us and direct us all, and that we pay attention to what He says, in Jesus' Name.

AMEN

Fr. Frank



## Prayer List - 11/10/24

Emmaus Anglican, Castle Rock, CO  
Fr. Theron Walker

ADSW 2024 Synod  
Puerto Vallarta, Mexico  
November 12-14

Bishop Steven and. Tricia

### **Those who need your healing care and strength:**

Donya Conine  
Wayne Conine Jr.  
Ellie  
Chip & Alyssa Taylor and baby Julius  
Gayla & George Chapman  
Ron & Linda Westerfield  
Baby, Naomi Jade Dircherl and her family  
Machele Lackey and Susie Sims

### **Those in the Armed Forces:**

Dominick Rankin, US Army, Ft. Bliss, TX  
Gabriella Murley, Ft. Bliss, TX  
Mason Gregg, Camp Courtney, Okinawa  
Creed Napier, US Air Force,  
J.W. Grove, US Navy  
Nicholas Tran, Joint Base Lewis-  
McChord,  
Shawn Zima, Hong Kong  
Wyatt Green, US Navy

### **We pray for our Epiphany family:**

Frank and Carolyn Wilson; the Zima  
family, Jeff Jessup  
Martha Vance  
Patrick Zima  
Rachel & Mary Spraitzer  
Stan and Sandy Thomas

## Lessons for Pentecost 25 - Proper 27

November 10, 2024

Anglican Lectionary  
year B

### **Old Testament Reading**

#### **1 Kings 17:8-16**

**8** Then the word of the Lord came to him,  
**9** "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you." **10** So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." **11** And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." **12** And she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." **13** And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son." **14** For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.'" **15** And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. **16** The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.





## Psalm 146

- 1 Praise the LORD, O my soul; \*  
while I live I will praise the LORD.
- 2 Indeed, as long as I have my being, \*  
I will sing praises unto my God.
- 3 Put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of  
man, \*  
for there is no help in them.
- 4 For when one breathes his last, he shall return  
again  
to the earth, \*  
and in that day all his thoughts perish.
- 5 Blessed is the one who has the God of Jacob  
for his help \*  
and whose hope is in the LORD his God,
- 6 Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all  
that is therein; \*  
who keeps his promise for ever;
- 7 Who does right to those who suffer wrong; \*  
and who feeds the hungry.
- 8 The LORD sets prisoners free; \*  
the LORD gives sight to the blind.
- 9 The LORD helps those who have fallen; \*  
the LORD loves the righteous.
- 10 The LORD cares for the strangers in the land;  
he defends the fatherless and widow; \*  
but the way of the ungodly he makes  
crooked.
- 11 The LORD shall be King for evermore, \*  
even your God, O Zion, throughout all  
generations.  
Praise the LORD.

## New Testament Reading

### Hebrews 9:24-28

**24** For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. **25** Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, **26** for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. **27** And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, **28** so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

## The Holy Gospel

### Mark 12:38-44

**38** And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces **39** and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, **40** who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." **41** And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. **42** And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. **43** And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. **44** For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."