



Church of the Epiphany

FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Pentecost 20 • Cloudcroft, New Mexico • October 6, 2024



We have six more Sundays to go in Sundays after Pentecost before we reach Advent. So keep buckled up!

In the reading this morning we are going to look at the prospect of finding community. The Old Testament creation story number two is of God taking a rib from Adam and making him a companion. The gospel of Mark might not be the best place to look for an example of community. This scripture is one that preachers do not relish with the subject of divorce. The marriage and divorce theme is obvious and then we throw in a little bit about children. But in the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees and his disciples there is community.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we turn to your Word and however we are confronted by it we need to hear your voice. Clearly you did not create us to be alone in this garden you set for us. We are like the pairs of animals you create to have a companion. You created us male and female. In our usual misunderstands of your rules we disobeyed them and were tossed from the Garden. Now we are into a new life of toil and work. Eventually you sent your Son Jesus to restore us to your favor. Let us bless the Lord for that plan of salvation.

Now Father continue to look on us and favor us with your continued grace and love.

May the community relationship you created remain strong and long lasting between creator and created.

In Jesus name we pray.

Amen,

Pentecost 20, Proper 22

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in continual godliness, that through your protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly serve you in good works, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Readings for Pentecost 20

Genesis 2:18-24

Psalm 8

Hebrews 2:9-18

Mark 10:2-16

We are in the National Election Cycle that comes up every four years and it is not a time of community building. The history of mankind has been one of building up and then dividing into separate parts and going on. I am reading a book on the history of mankind, and it starts with the primitive man and his development. We know little as archeological artifacts from the very early man are scarce and subject to many interpretations. We can study the habits of colonies of monkeys and make some assumptions on the progress in their ways and apply them to early man. The best assumption is that a group of twenty to maybe as many as a hundred constituted a fixed group. When it reached that size, the likely hood is that a new leader would emerge and take some of the tribe to start a new colony separate from the original. Numbers were few and land was plentiful to sustain these communities. We can look today at the same results. When a church reaches a Sunday attendance of more than a hundred the community is strained to keep it together. The answer is to spit into a new group and both units will have the ideal size.

In our reading today from Genesis 2 we have God's decision that man is not meant to be alone. The animals he has created are in pairs and none of them was found to be a suitable companion for the man. We are meant to be in relationships. We need a relationship with God and that is foremost. Equally important is that we need a relationship with one another. We are intended to live in community and in the relationship that develops from that union.

Community living is acknowledged to be a good condition in human affairs. It is not good to be alone, but it is also not easy to live together. We can find division and arguments everywhere we turn these days and at every level of society. The peace in the Garden of Eden was spoiled by Satan and division occurred and the two were tossed out. This story has been repeated throughout the course of humanity. We are meant to be together, but we never seem to get it right.

Jesus has a few words to say to us today in the Gospel of Mark about community.

During these Sundays after Pentecost, we spend time studying the Words of Jesus that he gave to us for our benefit. He did not just come to live with us and die for us but to show us how to live in community. He called disciples to not just follow him but to learn to live together. After he was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven he sent his Holy Spirit to continue the Holy work of building community.

This community of believers was essential to Jesus. It was to Peter that he said it was upon that rock that the church would be built.

In the Mark reading when asked about divorce Jesus immediately brings us the creation story of Genesis. By doing so he reminded them that marriage and community was God's idea. God created marriage so that man would not be alone. We see God's hand in marriage, and we have the hand of Jesus in the creation of community. That Church that would be built by Peter was called in Greek "ecclesia." The word means to be "called out" and into a new relationship of Christian community. We here are "called out" to this church and are joined together through the Holy Spirit into this one part of Jesus' total church.

Another thing we can learn about Christian community from the gospel reading, "What God has joined together, let no one separate." The Anglican Church in North America was not intended to be a divorce of churches. There are times however when the only possible outcome is for there to be separation for the health of the whole. The decision to separate should be a very important commitment and essential to the Christian community. Jesus was committed to his community. He knew that Judas was going to betray him but he was still faithful to him to the very end. He knew that all the other disciples would abandon him, which they did when he was arrested. After he was raised from the dead, he immediately went to them and found them and forgave them and gave them his peace. Jesus was committed to his community and continues to ask the same from us.

A Christian community is not like any other community. Jesus wants a community to be a place where we work things out. He wants us to be a place where we set aside our own agendas and seek His. He wants it to be a place where we truly love and forgive each other. The sign for a healthy community is when any one of these conditions occur and the congregation hears the call of Christ and works out its trouble to remain a community.

In this community there will be the fact of divorce. It may be in our own family or in a member's marriage. The community can respond to this situation by becoming a community of support to the affected individuals of the pain involved. We must meet the condition as a loving and consoling unit and not cast accusations. This is a time of intense need for the community to come to the comfort of the hurt caused by divorce.

From this gospel reading there is one more thing to learn about Christian community. This is the oddly placed insertion of Jesus accepting and welcoming children. In the middle of the conversation about marriage and divorce, Jesus was interrupted by people who were bringing their children to Jesus. The disciples tried to stop but when Jesus saw he was quick to allow them to come to him. "It is such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." Back in Jesus' day children were supposed to be seen but not heard. Certainly, they were not to disrupt or interrupt Jesus when he was having a grownup conversation. Jesus seems to always welcome interruptions, from children, those who were sick and from anyone who needed him.

The sign of a health church is that it is willing at any time to accept any disruption to make it possible for anyone to come into the community. The church is a gift to be shared with all.

It is not a good thing to be alone. We need each other and we need community and maybe bring a little bit of heaven to earth.

It will be a good day when the kingdom of God comes here to be with us. And this gift of community will be with us always and to the glory of God.

Amen.

Pastor Fred Griffin

Prayer List - 10/6/24

La Trinidad, Jalisco, Mexico
Lay leader, Miguel Meriono Lobos

Bishop Steven and. Tricia

Those who need your healing care and strength:

Carolyn and Frank Wilson
Wayne Conine Jr.
Annette Fazenbaker
Ellie
Clyde Brewer and family
Jean Jameson
Fr. Tom and Marilyn Atamian
Chip & Alyssa Taylor and baby
Julius
Gayla & George Chapman
Ron & Linda Westerfield

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, USS Halsey, DDG 97
Nicholas Tran, Joint Base Lewis-
McChord,
Shawn Zima, Hong Kong
Wyatt Green, US Navy

We pray for our Epiphany family:

Jerry Cuenca
Angelica Cuenca
Darcy Ellis,
Rosie Henry; Kym; Tammy
Bert and Judy Hungerford
Raul, Sarah, Evelyn Issa

Lessons for Pentecost 20 - Proper 22

October 6, 2024

Anglican Lectionary

year B

First Reading

Genesis 2:18-24

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." **19** Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. **20** The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. **21** So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. **22** And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. **23** Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Psalm 8

1 O LORD our Governor, how excellent is your
Name in all the world;*
you have set your glory above the heavens!

2 Out of the mouth of babes and infants you
have ordained strength, because of
your enemies,*
that you might still the enemy and the
avenger.

3 When I consider your heavens, even the
works of your fingers, *
the moon and the stars, which you
have ordained,

4 What is man, that you are mindful of him, *
the son of man, that you visit him?

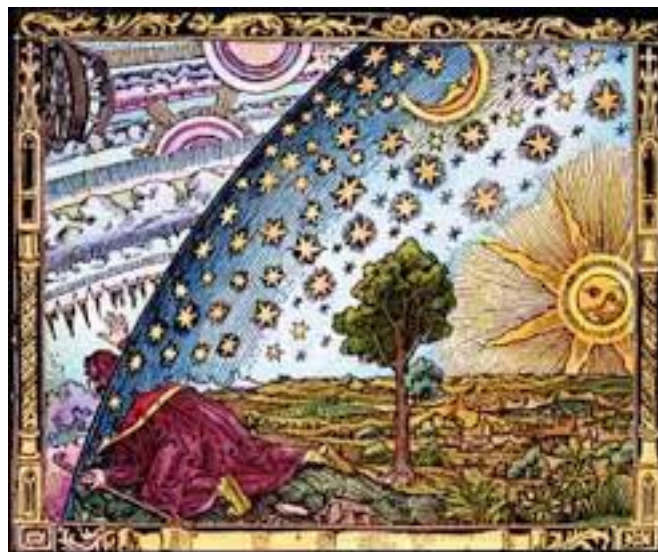
5 You made him little lower than the angels, *
to crown him with glory and honor.

6 You made him to have dominion over the
works of your hands, *
and you have put all things in
subjection under his feet:

7 All sheep and oxen, *
even the beasts of the field,

8 The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, *
and whatsoever walks through the paths
of the seas.

9 O LORD our Governor, *
how excellent is your Name in all the
world!



New Testament Reading

Hebrews 2:9-18

9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. **10** For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. **11** For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, **12** saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers;

in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."

13 And again, "I will put my trust in him."

And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. **16** For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. **17** Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. **18** For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

The Holy Gospel

Mark 10:2-16

2 And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

3 He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" **4** They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." **5** And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this

commandment. **6** But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'

7 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, **8** and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. **9** What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

10 And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. **11** And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, **12** and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

13 And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. **14** But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. **15** Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." **16** And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

