



# Church of the Epiphany

## FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Pentecost 22 • Cloudcroft, New Mexico • October 20, 2024



### **Pentecost 22, Proper 24**

Set us free, loving Father, from the bondage of our sins, and in your goodness and mercy give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

### **Readings for Pentecost 22**

Isaiah 53:4-12  
Psalm 91  
Hebrews 4:12-16  
Mark 10:35-45

Good morning! Today is officially the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost, but I think we ought to re-name it. We need to re-name it in honor of James and John and call it, "Dump on James and John" Sunday. Of course, the name comes from today's Gospel reading, in which everybody started dumping on James and John for apparently trying to get special treatment from Jesus. Remember they had asked to be able to sit on Jesus' right and left hand in His glory, and the disciples overheard what was going on and began to give them what for. I can almost hear them all talking and yelling at once - "What do you think you're doing?" "Who do you think you are?" I'll bet they sounded like a bunch of 5<sup>th</sup> graders all yelling at once. "Come on, you guys - Yeh, Yeh!" They probably went so far as to question their faith - "What kind of a disciple/Christian are you?" They are all piling on! If we re-named it "Dump on James and John" Sunday, we would be sure to forever remember what the Gospel story for this day was all about.

Before we react like all the disciples, however, perhaps we should take a moment to look at the whole story. After all, Jesus was able to get them all quieted down and find a way to fashion a lesson out of this. Sure, our first impulse is to join with the disciples dumping on James and John. Just like when we see someone cut in line, we want to see them get sent to the back of the line, or worse, right? The temptation is to take it upon ourselves to execute justice, even God's justice.

We might also consider whether maybe, just,

maybe, James and John got a bad rap. Yes, I know it sounds like they were trying to cut a special deal, but let's take a closer look and play defense attorney for a minute. Forty-eight years ago this month, I was admitted to the Bar of the State of New Mexico, and one thing I learned in those 48 years is that you should never underestimate the creativity of counsel for the defense.

To begin with, perhaps you recall last Sunday's Gospel reading from earlier in Mark, Chapter 10. Jesus told the rich young ruler to give up all he had and come, follow me. But the man wouldn't do it. The disciples were wondering how anyone could be saved, and Jesus told them that with men it was impossible, but with God, all things were possible. And then this interchange occurred:

Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."

Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now and in this age - houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions - and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

Remember those words?

Now as you think back, put yourself in the place of James and John, who were there and who heard Jesus' words. And remember they were among the first of the disciples, brothers who had been called out of their fishing boat and invited to become fishers of men. They put down everything and left, just left. They had indeed left family and fortune to follow Jesus. So, consider for a moment, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, maybe James and his brother John were just taking Jesus' promise to receive a hundredfold at face value, and claiming it. They were simple fishermen, and maybe they are just asking to be close to Jesus forever, and isn't that what we all want?

So I'm not so sure that James and John were acting as much like jerks as, at first glance, it may appear. I never could figure out how James and John were able to ask Jesus to cut them a special

deal and do it with a straight face. Having looked at the context, I think I maybe understand it a little better now.

But does that take James and John off the hook? Just because we **understand** someone's actions or motives doesn't necessarily make them right. Remember Jesus did question James and John closely to be sure that they knew what they were getting into. And then He gave the disciples, all 12 of them, a straightforward explanation about what was to be learned from this episode. The important lesson was about servanthood. Jesus explained that they were called to be servants, all 12 of them, just like we are all called to be servants, and not to be at all concerned with what reward that might bring, in heaven or on earth. We are not to take pride in how humble we are. We are not to compare ourselves with others at all. For sure, no dumping on others, NO PILING ON. We are called to leave that in God's hands, in His time and in His way, and to trust Him with it. We are to just let Him mold us and shape us in His way, in His time, so that He might use us for His purpose, not for our own, and trust Him to work with others the same way.

When we engage the people and the stories of Holy Scripture, we often see ourselves in the mirror that Scripture holds up in front of us. And oftentimes, we really don't much like what we see. But then sometimes it seems like others are unable to see the plain truth right in front of them. Look at today's Old Testament reading from Isaiah. Who was the prophet talking about? Jesus, of course. You all recognized that when you heard it read. Writing hundreds of years before John the Baptist came to announce the coming of the Savior, the prophet Isaiah painted a graphic word picture of the persecution and crucifixion. It is instantly clear to us who Isaiah was writing about. But we know the Jewish leaders didn't see it that way - not at all! We know from our reading of the Gospel stories that they were unable to see past what looked to them like flagrant and repeated violations of the law. For them, life should have

been as simplistic as it was for the author of today's Psalm 91 - God will defend and deliver all those who follow Him, which for them meant following the law to the letter. Obviously, a peasant from out in the sticks in Galilee could not be God's anointed like He and so many others claimed.

In truth, however, we must see Scripture like we see Jesus, through eyes like those of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews. Remember beginning at verse 12, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. This part of the reading almost sounds like an echo of the Collect for Purity that we recite at the beginning of our Sunday worship. But the way it reads in Hebrews almost sounds scary, and we are, indeed, called to fear God! But Hebrews chapter 4 continues, telling us more about Jesus, the Son of God, our great high priest, through Whom we can, in verse 16, ". . . with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

When we begin to realize what it means that God sees us just as we really are, warts and all, and still loves us, then we are much less likely to be dumping on James and John or on anyone else. Rather we are to know that we - and they, whoever "they" might be - are loved, not because we deserve it, but because **that's the way God is - that's what Jesus has done for us.** That's so difficult to fully accept, perhaps because we are used to thinking in human terms, that we have to earn our way along. But we can't earn love the same way we can try to earn trust and respect - the purest love isn't based on performance or merit - **it just is.** God's love is that way - **it just is.** Because of that love, that **just is** because He created us and gave us His Son to die for us, we may with confidence draw near to the throne of grace. We must always remember there is a big difference between our assurance of salvation based on what God has done through the Cross of Christ Jesus, and our presumption upon God because we have

been so good, and He is so loving and forgiving. When we receive the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood it is, among other things, a graphic reminder that it is only through that Body and Blood that we have the assurance of salvation. We may then rejoice in the wonder and love of such a great salvation. Bought with a price, paid in full on the Cross, for each and every one of us. And so instead of getting carried away acting like James and John, or dumping on James or John or anyone else, we need to just praise God and thank Him. And perhaps by serving Him we can reflect back a little, just a little, of the love He has shown for us. AMEN

Fr. Frank



## Prayer List - 10/20/24

Iglesia Anglicana, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico  
Rev. Jack Wehrs, Deacon Fernando Sandoval

Bishop Steven and. Tricia

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

Norman Bloom III  
Annette Fazenbaker  
Carolyn and Frank Wilson  
Wayne Conine Jr.  
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  
Gabiella 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:**

Walter and Carolyn Ford  
Esther & Joel Fyock  
Fred and Nancy Griffin and family  
Jim and Mary Ann Russ  
Mike and Jill Ryan  
Scott and Lisa Schwandt

## Lessons for Pentecost 22 - Proper 24

October 20, 2024

Anglican Lectionary

year B

### **Old Testament Reading**

#### **Isaiah 53:4-12**

- 4** Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.
- 5** But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought  
us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.
- 6** All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.
- 7** He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
yet he opened not his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is  
silent,  
so he opened not his mouth.
- 8** By oppression and judgment he was taken  
away;  
and as for his generation, who considered  
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,  
stricken for the transgression of my people?
- 9** And they made his grave with the wicked  
and with a rich man in his death,  
although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.
- 10** Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;  
he has put him to grief;  
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,  
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong  
his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in  
his hand.
- 11** Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see  
and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the  
righteous one, my servant, make many to be  
accounted righteous, and he shall bear their  
iniquities.

## Old Testament *continued*

**12** Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

## Psalm 91

1 Whoever dwells under the defense of the Most High \*  
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say unto the LORD, "You are my refuge and my stronghold,\*  
my God in whom I will trust."

3 For he shall deliver you from the snare of the hunter \*  
and from the deadly pestilence.

4 He shall defend you under his wings, and you shall be safe under his feathers; \*  
his faithfulness and truth shall be your shield and buckler.

5 You shall not be afraid of any terror by night, \*  
nor of the arrow that flies by day,

6 Of the pestilence that walks in darkness, \*  
nor of the sickness that destroys at noonday.

7 A thousand shall fall beside you, and ten thousand at your right hand, \*  
but it shall not come near you.

8 Indeed, with your eyes you shall behold \*  
and see the reward of the ungodly.

9 Because you have said, "The LORD is my refuge," \*  
and have made the Most High your stronghold,

10 There shall no evil happen to you, \*  
neither shall any plague come near your dwelling.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over you, \*  
to keep you in all your ways.

12 They shall bear you in their hands, \*  
that you hurt not your foot against a stone.

13 You shall tread upon the lion and adder; \*  
the young lion and the serpent you shall trample under your feet.

14 "Because he has set his love upon me,  
therefore I will deliver him; \*  
I will lift him up, because he has known my Name.

15 He shall call upon me, and I will hear him; \*  
indeed, I am with him in trouble; I will deliver him and bring him honor.

16 With long life I will satisfy him, \*  
and show him my salvation."



## New Testament Reading

### Hebrews 4:12-16

**12** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

**13** And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

**14** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. **15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **16** Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

## The Holy Gospel

### Mark 10:35-45

**35** And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." **36** And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"

**37** And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."

**38** Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" **39** And they said to him, "We are able."

And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, **40** but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." **41** And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. **42** And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

**43** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,

**44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

