

5 Easter Sunday C, May 15, 2022
St. Mary's-in-the-Valley Episcopal Church
1010 12th Street, P.O. Box 491
Ramona, CA 92065

Liturgy begins on page 355, Book of Common Prayer

Alleluia. Christ is risen.
People The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

The Celebrant may say
Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid;
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly
love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

To God be the Glory
Tune: The Ashgrove, from Malcolm Archer's English Folk Song Mass
Sung by St. James Press Choir

To God be the glory, all glory in the highest
and peace to his people who dwell here below,
Our heav'nly Father, our Lord, and our sov'reign,
to you, the Almighty, our praises bestow.
We worship and adore you,
we bow here before you
with grateful thanksgiving,
our song let us raise.
All glory and honour and glad adoration
to God in the highest, hosanna and praise.

Lord Jesus, the only begotten of the Father
we praise and we bless you, the Son and the Lamb.
The sin of the world you have taken upon you,
have mercy upon us, the Great I AM.
For holy, you meet us,
yet lowly you greet us,
the Lord in the highest,
the Holy One.
All glory to the Father, the Son and the Spirit,
From ages everlasting, the Three in One.

The Celebrant then says
The Lord be with you.

People And also with you. Celebrant Let us pray.

Collect

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Acts 11:1-18

Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

Psalm 148

Laudate Dominum

1 Hallelujah!

Praise the LORD from the heavens; *
praise him in the heights.

- 2 Praise him, all you angels of his; *
praise him, all his host.
- 3 Praise him, sun and moon; *
praise him, all you shining stars.
- 4 Praise him, heaven of heavens, *
and you waters above the heavens.
- 5 Let them praise the Name of the LORD; *
for he commanded, and they were created.
- 6 He made them stand fast for ever and ever; *
he gave them a law which shall not pass away.
- 7 Praise the LORD from the earth, *
you sea-monsters and all deeps;
- 8 Fire and hail, snow and fog, *
tempestuous wind, doing his will;
- 9 Mountains and all hills, *
fruit trees and all cedars;
- 10 Wild beasts and all cattle, *
creeping things and winged birds;
- 11 Kings of the earth and all peoples, *
princes and all rulers of the world;
- 12 Young men and maidens, *
old and young together.
- 13 Let them praise the Name of the LORD, *
for his Name only is exalted,
his splendor is over earth and heaven.
- 14 He has raised up strength for his people
and praise for all his loyal servants, *
the children of Israel, a people who are near him.
Hallelujah!

Revelation 21:1-6

I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them as their God;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

John 13:31-35

At the last supper, when Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Sermon:

5 Easter C May 15, 2022
Acts 11:1-18 Psalm 148
Revelation 21:1-6 John 13:31-35

As a species, we are distinct in being very language centered beings. Everything gets mediated through language; even when we were infants and were undeveloped in having language, as more advanced language users, we have to project upon infants their humans experience as though they were advanced enough to talk about it. When we see a baby's response, we make assumptions about how they are experiencing their world and we use language to do so on their behalf.

We are prisoners of having language but that does stop us from speculating about beings who are outside our language prison. We just assume, like the proverbial Dr. Doolittle, we can talk to the animals, and they can talk to us. And we assume that our plants react to our speech as well.

The Psalmist imagines that all the creatures and creation can praise the Lord. If praising the Lord with human language is our highest profession, then surely the creatures and creation must be able to do that too in their own way. Can we understand that as human beings with language communication ability, we cannot help but project that on everything which we experience?

The spiritual reason we do it is because in understanding Jesus Christ to be God with us, as the eternal Christ who was also declared to be the Eternal Word, the Eternal Language from the beginning. And we are made in the image of Eternal Word.

St. John the Divine writes it in a bit different way, by saying Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, in effect Christ is everything which can come to any alphabet.

As language users, we use language to first declare that we have experiences, and those experiences are classified by language. The Psalmist wrote poetry of projected experience, assuming that animals and creation were enough like us to have the vocation to praise the Lord. In fact, the Psalmist declares that the highest vocation of all creation is to praise the Lord. And this is completely consistent with the first commandment, "The Lord our God, is One. Worship only the One God."

What are other human experiences which we have classified in our language experience? We have dreams and visions, and dreams and visions are alike in the sense that they are different than our ordinary "feet on the ground" commonsense experience. Space and time rules don't apply in dreams and visions. Gravity doesn't apply in visions. In dreams and visions, the doors or gates of perception get opened and every sort of reality can get juxtaposed in this dream and visionary seeing. Peter had a vision, which he believed was God giving him command to eat "non-kosher" animals, the ones eaten by the Gentiles who were coming to accept Christ and having experiences of the Holy Spirit. This dream for Peter was preparation for him to be receptive to people who had different cultural eating traditions than his own. He was commanded not to make kosher habits as the basis for the determination of the love and favor of God. And in an expansive way, we need to see this as a teaching for us not to attach cultural and national restrictions on what the love of God can do for people who may be foreign to us.

St. John the Divine, wrote that he was "in the Spirit." He had his perceptual doors opened to the kaleidoscopic and merged presentations of heavenly realities. He saw and wrote about unbelievable and impossible things; things which cannot be possible within our commonsense reality. He heard a declaration that death, tears, crying, and mourning would be no more. He heard a declaration about their being a new heaven and a new earth. What could that mean? Why would God make a new heaven? Isn't the heavenly abode of God already perfect or was it polluted by the rebellious angels who promoted themselves as lesser gods?

St. John the Divine perhaps was one who had been a prisoner and forced to work in the mines of the Isle of Patmos. Suffering and extreme deprivations can create visionary states and these visionary states can be an analgesic from the severity of pain. Christians have been reading the Book of Revelation for years with some trying to force visionary states upon the commonsense state of human existence. It can't be done; what can be accomplished is the comfort of knowing that the fullness of parallel reality can provide insight, comfort, creativity, invention, hope, and

inspiration for us as we have to live in commonsense reality most of the time. Many biblical fundamentalists would like to promote dream reality as the same thing as commonsense reality, and we need to be aware of where that kind of thinking is influencing our current political life today.

The last kind of human language experience which I would like to cite from our Bible reading today is what I call the declaration of providence. Providence is the reflection upon a higher and guiding purpose that one cites about a past event.

John's Gospel was written more than a half century after Jesus. It is a book of the providence of God as observed from the perspective of what had happened within the Jesus Movement. Practically speaking there is no past until the present. The past is invented when it is contrasted with the present. The leaders of the Jesus Movement could not pretend that everything which had happened in the fifty years after Jesus, didn't happen. The Jesus Movement had been successful. Why was it successful? To explain the success of the Jesus Movement, the life of Jesus is retold which include the seeds of why the Jesus Movement became lasting and successful. Telling the past means that logic has to be challenged. If a close friend of Jesus, Judas betrays him and turns him over to be killed by the Roman authority, Pontius Pilate, what is the commonsense logic? Jesus would be removed, and his movement will end and die. But how is the story told? When Judas is revealed at the Last Supper, Jesus said a strange thing: "Now the Son of Man is glorified." Jesus also told Pontius Pilate, that Pilate did not have any power to release him.

From the advanced position of fifty years of a growing and successful Jesus Movement, the individual events in the life of Jesus are declared to be the providence of God. And it is wonderful that some things turn out very surprising from some very dire circumstances.

As much as we believe in providence, and because we have experienced some eventual good things occurring after some very bad things, we still need to be very careful about presuming to know specific providence in the present, because we can really minimize present time suffering. And providence does not mean that everything bad has equally good consequences. How many people want to say that it is God's will for the Ukrainian people to be going through what they are because there is something better for them in the future? Can we see how shallow and minimizing it is for us to declare God's will for other people who are suffering while they are suffering.

Let us appreciate the language of having really big hope in such visionary presentations of a new heaven and new earth, without any dying, mourning and suffering. It is a vision of the reconciliation of all things; and in hope we can experience this as a parallel reality, even while we know that in our commonsense reality of the world, there is lots of real, real, suffering which we cannot minimize by declaring our hope in eventual reconciliation.

Christ as the eternal Word, invites us to learn how to understand our experience with language which presents God's love, as found in the most profound gritty proclamation which the writer of John's Gospel understood to be the words of Jesus:

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven: by the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the
Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the
dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

The Peace of the Lord be always with you. People: And also with you.

Hymn: # 657, Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
Played and sung by Rob and Deborah Lewallen

1 Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heav'n, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art.

Visit us with thy salvation;
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

2 Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
into ev'ry troubled breast.
Let us all in thee inherit,
let us find the promised rest.
Take away the love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be.
End of faith, as its beginning,
set our hearts at liberty.

3 Come, Almighty, to deliver,
let us all thy life receive.
Suddenly return, and never,
nevermore they temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

4 Finish, then, thy new creation;
true and spotless let us be.
Let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee.
Changed from glory into glory,
till in heav'n we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.

Doxology: Sung by Rob and Deb Lewallen

The Lord be with you. People And also with you.

Holy Eucharist, Prayer A, p. 361, BCP

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.
People We lift them to the Lord.
Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. People It is right to give him thanks and
praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father
Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. But chiefly are we bound to praise you for the glorious
resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; for he is the true Paschal Lamb, who was

sacrificed for us, and has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has won for us everlasting life. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Sung and Played by Rob and Deborah Lewallen

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power, of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power, of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Celebrant: Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus

Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:
Sung and played by Rob and Deborah Lewallen

Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. AMEN.

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

Sung and played by Rob and Deb Lewallen

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be 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 all that is evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen. Amen. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; People: Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Communion Hymn: 'Tis the Gift to Be Simple, and I Danced in the Morning, Shaker Tune
Played by Stanley V. Smith, Jr. on the Hammer Dulcimer

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where I ought to be;
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed;
to turn, turn, will be my delight.
Till by turning, turning we come round **right.**

I danced on a Friday and the sky turned black;
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back;
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,
But I am the dance and I still go on.

Dance, then, wherever you may be;
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.
And I'll lead you all wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

Post Communion Prayer (BCP, page 365)

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction:

Dismissal:

Lay Eucharistic Minister: Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. People:
Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Closing Hymn: Hymn # 594, God of Grace, God of Glory
Played and sung by Joshua Charney, Ph.D

1 God of grace and God of glory,
on thy people pour thy pow'r.
Crown thine ancient church's story,
bring its bud to glorious flow'r.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

2 Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us,
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.

3 Cure thy children's warring madness;
bend our pride to thy control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

4 Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore.
Let the search for thy salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving thee whom we adore,
serving thee whom we adore.