

Celebrate

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 14, 2023

Jesus does not abandon his followers. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus comes to abide with his disciples of every generation. As Pentecost draws near, we are reminded that the risen Christ dwells in us as the Spirit of truth. We receive this Spirit in baptism and pray that in our gathering around the Lord's table the Spirit will transform us to be the body of the risen Christ in the world.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you hold together all things in heaven and on earth. In your great mercy receive the prayers of all your children, and give to all the world the Spirit of your truth and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Acts 17:22-31

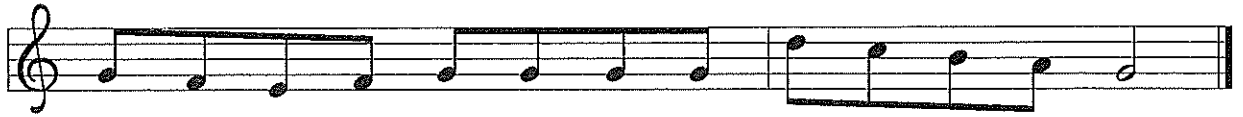
In Athens, Paul faces the challenge of proclaiming the gospel to Greeks who know nothing of either Jewish or Christian tradition. He proclaims that the "unknown god" whom they worship is the true Lord of heaven and earth who will judge the world with justice through Jesus, whom God has raised from the dead.

Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where

they would live, ²⁷so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said,

'For we too are his offspring.'

²⁹Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."



Bless our God, you peo - ples; let the sound of praise be heard.

Bless our ¹ God, you peoples;

let the sound of ¹ praise be heard.

⁹**Our God has kept us a- ¹ mong the living
and has not allowed our ¹ feet to slip. R**

¹⁰For you, O God, have ¹ tested us;
you have tried us just as sil- ¹ ver is tried.

¹¹**You brought us in- ¹ to the net;
you laid heavy burdens up- ¹ on our backs.**

¹²You let people ride over our heads; we went through ¹ fire and water,
but you brought us out into a place ¹ of refreshment.

¹³**I will enter your house ¹ with burnt offerings
and will pay ¹ you my vows—**

¹⁴those that I promised ¹ with my lips
and spoke with my mouth when I ¹ was in trouble.

¹⁵**I will offer you burnt offerings of fatlings with the ¹ smoke of rams;
I will give you ox- ¹ en and goats. R**

¹⁶Come and listen, all you ¹ who believe,
and I will tell you what God has ¹ done for me.

¹⁷**I called out to God ¹ with my mouth,
and praised the Lord ¹ with my tongue.**

¹⁸If I had cherished evil ¹ in my heart,
the Lord would ¹ not have heard me;

¹⁹**but in truth ¹ God has heard me
and has attended to the sound ¹ of my prayer.**

²⁰Blessed be God, who has not reject- ¹ ed my prayer,
nor withheld unfailing ¹ love from me. R

The author of 1 Peter encourages Christians to remain faithful even in the face of defamiation and persecution. In baptism we are made clean to act in accordance with what is right.

Who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. ¹⁸For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order

to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Gospel

John 14:15-21

In final words to his disciples on the night of his arrest, Jesus encourages obedience to his commandments and speaks of the Spirit, who will be with them forever.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

¹⁸“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while

the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

United in the hope and joy of the resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

God our faithful companion, you promise to never leave us and to send your Spirit to guide us in wisdom and truth. Send your people into the world to serve as mirrors that reflect and magnify your love. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

All the earth sings praises to you. Grant your care to the creatures, plants, and places that are suffering, and equip us to respond to their song. Make us agents of restoration and refreshment for all your beloved creation. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

You call all people of the world your children. Judge the nations justly, show mercy to all who are oppressed, and speak truth to power through your prophets. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Nurturing Lord, you sent your Spirit to grant us peace. Make your presence known to those who feel abandoned or alone, and to all who are sick or grieving (*especially*). Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

You hold us in your loving care. We pray for mothers and mother figures. Console all who long to be mothers, children estranged from their mothers, anyone grieving the death of a mother, and mothers who have lost a child. Support all for whom this day is difficult. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Almighty God, you give life and breath to all things. We give thanks for the apostle Matthias and all your saints (*especially*). Sustain us by your love until we join the saints in glory. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Rejoicing in the victory of Christ's resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to you, almighty and eternal God; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (Matthias, Apostle [transferred]) Luke 6:12-16. **Tuesday** 1 Peter 3:8-12. **Wednesday** John 16:16-24. **Thursday** (Ascension of Our Lord; commemoration of Erik, King of Sweden, martyr, died 1160) Luke 24:44-53. **Friday** Ephesians 2:1-7. **Saturday** 2 Kings 2:13-15. **Seventh Sunday of Easter** (commemoration of Helena, mother of Constantine, died around 330) Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35; 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11.

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