

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost - Year B

73rd Week of Pandemic - Indoor Service

2 Kings 4:42-44

Psalm 145:10-18

Ephesians 3:14-21

John 6:1-21

07/25/2021

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

1Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. 2A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. 3Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. 4Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. 5When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" 6He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. 7Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." 8One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9"Here is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" 10Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. 11Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." 13So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley

loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. 14When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." 15When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. 16When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. 20But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

The Gospel of our Lord

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **Ephesians!**

Good morning! I have spent my whole life in the church. I was baptized in the same congregation where my parents were married. In confirmation they called me "pastor Tim" because I seemed to know all the answers. Before my senior year of high school I had decided that I wanted to be a pastor, and I majored in theology and religious studies in college. So it's safe to say that I was passingly familiar with the Bible. So, you'll understand that as I went on a retreat, the same retreat where I met my wife Megan, in the spring of my sophomore year of college, I was ashamed to admit that I had never read an entire book of the Bible. Even as a theology and religious studies major, I was still in introductory classes, and

we didn't have time to go through entire books. I had sat in on hundreds of Bible studies, dozens of classes, thousands of church services... but I had never sat down and read a book in the Bible for my own spiritual well being. So, on a picnic bench on the Lantz Farm retreat center I sat in the sun on a wonderful afternoon and decided it was time to end my shame.

I opened the Bible and took a gander at the contents page to decide what I would read. I knew that starting at the beginning would only set me up for failure. I had tried that in high school, and I barely made it through Genesis. "I like the Psalms..." I thought, "but they weren't a cohesive story... Song of Songs was about two young lovers... so that was a possibility..." but then I figured since I'm a Christian, I should start somewhere in the New Testament. "I love Jesus and all... but I hear the Gospel stories every Sunday... Acts and Romans were very intimidating and a little long..." What I needed was a win. "I'll read a shorter letter then!" I thought. "But which one... it can't be Galatians, Paul is too angry in that one... but Ephesians... this might be the ticket!"

And so, that was how it came to be that the New Testament letter Ephesians became the first book in the Bible that I finished. And what a book it is! Listen again to our second reading!

*"14For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. 16I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, 17and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. 18I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so*

*that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, 21to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”*

Is that not good or what?! Which brings me to a question that I have for all of you. I'm handing out a sheet and I want you to answer a few questions for me. As you leave worship today, just put them in the offering plate. I'm going to post these on the bulletin board as you walk down by the library. But answer this: What is your favorite book in the Bible? (Not your favorite verse) Why? Also, is there a book in the Bible that you have always felt intimidated by? Which book? I'll give you a few minutes to fill that out.

Great, thanks! While my favorite book has changed, Ephesians has always been one that is close to my heart. I mean, even the city, Ephesus, is just a cool name to pronounce. While we don't have time to dive into the background of this letter, we CAN point out a few things from the assigned reading for today. We have been reading chunks of the letter for the past few weeks, and we'll stick with it through the month of August. But in Ephesians Paul, or someone from Paul's circle, writes a letter to the church in Ephesus encouraging them to remain faithful. The writer is concerned with reminding the group that God is faithful, and more importantly, that God is busy at work within their community! Sound familiar? It seems that as long as we have congregations, we'll be tempted to doubt that God is at work within them.

But don't be afraid! Israel Kamudzandu, an associate professor of New Testament Studies at St. Paul School of Theology writes that *“Prayer is what the soul requires, and God seeks to communicate with us through prayer. Many New Testament books point to the importance of prayer, as*

*the only thing desired by human souls. In many ways, prayer unlocks miracles in the lives of people. We in the 21st century, like the Ephesian Church, need to rediscover prayer and learn as well as grow in the art of prayer.”<sup>1</sup>*

It can be easy to think that God was only ever active in the past. But then we are forgetting that by the mere act of praying, we’re taking part in God’s activity here and now! In 6 chapters the book of Ephesians encourages us that we can do it, that God hasn’t given up on us and so we shouldn’t either. Now, in words much better than what I could write:

*18I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, 21to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”*

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/ordinary-17-2/commentary-on-ephesians-314-21-5>