

## June 29, The Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Opening Collect

Gracious God  
through Jesus you have set us free  
from the constraints of the Law.  
Turn us from the ways of the world,  
that following the way of your Son,  
we might become slaves to the gospel  
and love one another as you love us.  
We ask through Jesus Christ our Lord  
who with you and the Holy Spirit is one God,  
now and for ever.

**1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21:** *Last week we read that Elijah, threatened by Queen Jezebel for killing the prophets of Baal, fled to the relative safety of Judah. God's presence was revealed to Elijah, not in fierce winds, fire or earthquakes but in silence, in which he heard God command him to continue his work. Elijah learned that his last piece of work would be to anoint Elisha to be his apprentice ("servant") who would take Elijah's place as God's prophet. Before Elisha could accompany Elijah, however, he asked to return home for a "bon voyage" party, about which we hear in our reading.*

Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.  
So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

**Galatians 5:1, 13-25:** *The Galatian Christians from the Jewish heritage had a hard time believing that we are saved by God's grace alone, and taught that observance of the Mosaic Law is required. In our reading today Paul reminded his listeners that we are freed from the Law, and must not become slaves to it any*

*more. He then addressed the division that this debate had caused in the Church, reminding all that the greatest commandment is that we love one another.*

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

**Luke 9:51-62:** *Jesus and the twelve were passing through Samaritan towns on their way to Jerusalem and the cross. The town-folk wanted nothing to do with them (Samaritans had their own holy site and rejected Jerusalem). Jesus didn't seem particularly upset by this, but James and John asked Jesus if they could call down fire from heaven to destroy them. Jesus showed that he hadn't come to wreak vengeance, but to bring salvation. He rebuked James and John. Another man asked*

*if he could go back and say goodbye to his family (like Elisha did) before he becomes a disciple, but Jesus' response indicated that time is now to be a follower, not when it is convenient.*

It came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

*Jesus sailed from the safe confines of Galilee to the Gentile country of the Gerasenes. There he's met by a man who was plagued by demons. Multiple demons. So many demons they simply are named "Legion". He lived in isolation, shackled and under guard, away from the city and its people and children. He lived among the tombs with the dead, being dead to the world, a literal dead man walking. Unfit for civilization, possessed by a legion of demons who would drive him naked and screaming into the wilderness, this man inspires our terror and sympathy at the same time. You'll recall that the young men who greeted the women at Jesus' open, empty tomb were clothed in white, while the young man who fled dark Gethsemane on the night of Jesus' betrayal and arrest ran off naked. So while streaking may have been a funny college prank back in the 70s, it's no laughing matter in the Gospel. The wilderness, as you recall from Jesus' temptation, is the devil's playground. We feel for his plight and his condition, and yet we're terrified of him. We'll avert our eyes. We'll avoid contact. He's like the homeless we meet on the street corners and under the viaducts. And yet much, much worse.*

*"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most-High God?" "I beg you, do not torment me." They plead for mercy, but Jesus has not come to show mercy to the devil and his demons. He's come to judge them and to undo their work. They negotiate with him. They know their fate: the Abyss, their place of eternal torment and imprisonment. They bargain for a herd of pigs instead. This is, after all, Gentile country. You'd never see a herd of pigs in Israel. But here in the Gerasenes, there are pigs, and with the permission of Jesus, they become demon-possessed pigs that rush headlong down a steep bank and into the lake and are drowned. All this, right in front of the herdsmen looking on, watching their profits go over a cliff into the sea.*

*Little wonder the townsfolk ask Jesus to leave! This was just over the top weird. Frightening. Jesus is just too much trouble to have around. We had this situation well under control until his boat landed, and then all hell literally broke loose, and now there's a herd of precious pigs floating in the sea. The unclean spirits are cast into the unclean pigs and thrown into the depths.*

*Meanwhile, the man is now clothed and in his right mind. Just like that. No extensive rehab. Nothing. Just a word from Jesus, the demons depart, and the man's life and mind is in order again. Everything that had plagued him had gone into the pigs and was drowned in the water. And all with nothing more than a word from Jesus. He wanted to follow Jesus, join Jesus' band of disciples and go back to Galilee with Jesus. Who could blame him? He wanted to be a part of this man's*

*group who had literally saved his life from a legion of demons. But Jesus had other plans for him. He sent him away, back to his home. He would be Jesus' "man on the ground" in the Gerasenes, among the Gentiles, outside the borders of Israel. "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." He's of much more use to Jesus where he is, "to declare the praises of him who called him out of darkness into his marvelous light." And that's what he did. He told everyone in the whole city what Jesus had done for him. And you can be sure the people listened.*

*Return to your home, your life, your ministries, your family and friends and neighbours, and declare how much God has done for you. He has called you out of darkness to live in His marvelous light. He has forgiven you, raised you, clothed you, freed you, glorified you. You are baptized, freed from the Law, sons and daughters of God, heirs of eternal life, clothed with Christ. You have His Spirit to ward off all the unclean spirits, the Spirit that cries out "Abba! Father!" from the depths of your heart to the very heart of God. Whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, you are free. So much good news to tell. So much grace, healing and salvation to receive.*

*Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

### **Concluding Prayers:**

We pray for Charles, our king and all who govern in this nation and in the world. That the law of faith which guides us be our standard in judging the laws of land and church and culture, and that our lives be conformed to the faithful love of Christ.

We pray for Todd, our bishop, and for our lay and ordained ministers in this parish that parishioners, weakened through illness of mind or body, feel your protective hand and our tangible care.

We pray for all who are members of our parish. That we who were baptized into Christ be empowered to carry the cross as we minister to free all who are oppressed.

We pray for all who live in our community and for our civic leaders. That the paths we walk be wide enough for all peoples, for the homeless, for aliens in flight, for prisoners, for persons of all colours, for all who are ostracized, for those dying of incurable disease, for all who cry out for help,

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,  
for you sent Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah  
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.  
We offer these prayers  
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbours  
that we might constantly seek the lost  
and free them from all that holds them in bondage  
by the power of your Son  
who makes you known to us,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit,  
is one God, for ever and ever.

**For our Parish.**

O GOD the Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the faithful: Sanctify this parish by thine abiding presence. Enlighten the minds of thy people more and more with the light of the everlasting Gospel. Bring erring souls to the knowledge of God our Saviour; and those who are walking in the way of life, keep steadfast unto the end.

Give patience to the sick and afflicted, and renew them in body and soul.  
Guard from forgetfulness of thee those who are strong and prosperous.  
Increase in us thy manifold gifts of grace, and make us all to be fruitful in good works; O blessed Spirit, whom with the Father and the Son together we worship and glorify, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

**Lord's Prayer**

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 evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,  
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord:  
And the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always. *Amen*