



TRINITY SUNDAY, May 27th, 2018

Isaiah 6:1-8;

Psalms 29;

Romans 8:12-17;

John 3:1-17

1ST READING

A Reading from the Book of Isaiah

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

ISAIAH 6:1-8

PSALM 29

- 1 Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, * ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- 2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; * worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
- 3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; * the Lord is upon the mighty waters.
- 4 The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; * the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendour.
- 5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; * the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
- 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, * and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.
- 7 The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire; the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; * the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
- 8 The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe * and strips the forests bare.
- 9 And in the temple of the Lord * all are crying, "Glory!"
- 10 The Lord sits enthroned above the flood; * the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.
- 11 The Lord shall give strength to his people; * the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

God of mystery and power, open our eyes to the flame of your love, and open our ears to the thunder of your justice, that we may receive your gifts of blessing and peace, to the glory of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2ND READING

A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ — if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

ROMANS 8:12-17

GOSPEL READING

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ According to John

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

JOHN 3:1-17

What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.

About a week ago, I eavesdropped on a conversation the other day about someone we will call Emily trying to get her phone service fixed. That would seem to be a simple task. You know, call up the phone company on someone else's phone and tell the whoever that your phone is broken and you would like it fixed — and ask how soon it can be done?

Most of us remember a time when that would have been all one would have to do to get some action. The next day or sooner, the doorbell would ring and a nice man in work clothes would appear at the door. He typically would have with him a little tool box and electrical circuit tracing gauges swinging from his belt. What's the trouble? he would ask. And he would do what had to be done to make things right again.

That was in the 1950's and `60's. We are now well into the advanced 21st century. Are things better now? — or more fearful? You decide!

Getting back to the conversation upon which I eavesdropped, quite a difference was experienced by Emily. Eavesdrop with me on Emily's conversation with the phone company.

What is your name?

Emily.

I can't talk to you Emily.

The phone account is in another person's name.

Yes, that would be my husband; but he is at work.

He would be grateful if you spoke to me so our service can be restored.

My name is on the account, as well.

Yes, I see that Emily.

But you will have to answer some questions.

What year were you born? What is your mothers' birth name? — and her middle name?

What year, brand and model was your first car?

What is your account number?

Well the company representative finally decided to risk talking to Emily. A time was set to make the repairs. Emily waited. They never showed up. Later in another phone call, they said they were delayed and when they got to her apartment, no one answered the door. So they left. They didn't take the time to see if the Building Superintendent would let them in to make the necessary repairs.

So Emily had to start all over again. To date, nothing has been accomplished. Emily still has no phone service. During the last contact, the company apparently suggested she avoid all of this trouble by getting one of their cell-phones.

Now, I am sure that the phone company has good reasons for putting customers through so much trouble, even for simple matters. This type of situation could occur to a wide range of organizations. But at times, we all feel a little bit of fear coming in when a company phone answers by a recorded voice saying: *Your call is important to us. The next customer representative will be on the line as soon as available.* This becomes worse when followed by an assault of loud clanging music. Our fears begin to be realized.

We live in an age of fear — big fears & little fears — fears that are based on subtleties — fears that are horrific — fears leveraged by the power of suggestion & computer virus fears. Everyday has a new set of fears seemingly confronting us. And many of the old fears seem to hang on for all too long.

We cope the best we can. We try to discern the real from the fabricated. Our minds try to deal with what is real. We feel badly for those who we see as unfairly punished for no reason.

It is said that one can impact other people through fear; or through love. And that brings us to our readings for this Sunday. Whether it is by bad customer relations; or by threat of arrest; or by fear of ridicule; or plain bullying; people are victimized by those who try to play them by employing common fears. They seek to persuade others by threats. After all, most folk wish only to live quiet lives, without harming anyone or being harmed. They don't relish the idea of being threatened.

This is Trinity Sunday. Last week, we heard about the coming of the Holy Spirit and about the Holy Trinity. Much of what we heard this morning revolves around the Holy Spirit. I think that is important because with the Holy Spirit we have a potential overlap with the nature of human beings like you and like me.

As we have discussed in times past, people have two basic natures: physical and spiritual. We seem to spend most of our time tending to our physical nature. Indeed, our physical nature constantly puts demands and desires before us. We get hungry every day. We hate pain and want it relieved quickly. We get tired and need our rest/sleep. We get physically sick and demand medicine and other treatment. Our bodies like to be pampered.

But then there is our spiritual side. The human spirit is a major part of who we really are. Yet, we have greater trouble describing our spiritual side. But it is not invisible. It is seen often in the way we act or respond to what is happening around us. And yes, it too is influenced.

For example, constant physical trials and burdens can begin to dampen the human spirit. Good times can lift our spirits. But, more importantly, and longer lasting is the influence of God's Spirit on our spirits. Our general outlook matters — matters a lot!

As we heard last week, the Holy Spirit is the centre of truth and love. As such, the Spirit dwells within our hearts. The more we study about the Spirit and abide by the love to which God calls us, the more our human spirits are going to define who we are as people of God. We are going to be more responsive and motivated by love. More than that, we are going to be people whose love of others is unmistakable.

One example that I have mentioned in the past is that of a Naval Captain whose unit had the highest morale — so much so that he became legendary at the Naval base to which I was assigned. Why? Because he was so loving and nice to his subordinates that they continually wanted to please him! He led a life of love and no one could ignore it — no one wanted to ignore it. He never had to order people around — and keep in mind that this was in the military! Imagine similar experiences in the environments in which you and I may work or spend our time.

Living our lives according to the Spirit of God is a most wonderful way to spend our time on earth. A whole new perspective on life opens up before us. And we are well satisfied. Thanks be to God for making us spiritual beings and sharing the Holy Spirit in us, and with us.