

# **“The Future Is Now”**



The Rev. Ryan Wiksell

June 23, 2024 | 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

St. Michael’s Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God, Amen.

- This church has no future.
  - Do I have your attention now?
  - Because the fact is, *I* have no future.
  - Let me tell you a story.
- When I was 10, 11 and 12 years old I went to a week-long summer camp in Oklahoma every year. It was the Assemblies of God church camp, and it was a beautiful place and fun to go.
  - However, the evening worship meetings were a bit intense.
  - It was probably exactly like you would imagine a Pentecostal camp meeting for adolescents. Big music, big messages, and lots of raising hands and speaking in tongues
  - I learned to speak in tongues for the first time there.
  - I also remember a camp counselor praying over me during the extended altar call time.
  - I remember him putting his hand on my forehead, and fervently declaring that God had a special purpose for my life, to be a leader and a prophet.

- Of course, that made me feel really good. Every kid wants to know that God has a special purpose for them.
- In a way, you could say that came true.
- But here's the catch. If you spend enough time being Pentecostal, especially as a kid, you will eventually have the same exact thing declared over *you*.
- I actually value this experience, by the way. I don't have any reason to resent it, or to criticize the way other Christians worship.
- But as I matured in the faith, I learned to understand this dynamic a little better than I did in that open-air tabernacle in the hills of southern Oklahoma.
- When you are fervent about your faith, and about the Bible,
  - It's easy to get very excited about prophets and prophecy.
  - It's fun to look at Elijah and Isaiah and Jeremiah, and trace their prophecies to the point where they are fulfilled in the Gospels
  - And it's fun to look at the prophecies, both in the OT and NT, especially Revelation, that have yet to be fulfilled

- And imagine what the future will be like
- Sometimes it's frightening, like imagining a thing called the Rapture, or a 7-year tribulation
- And sometimes it's exhilarating, like imagining Jesus himself on the throne of the world, and a shining New Jerusalem descending from the sky
- And we think ahead to that glorious time, and say
  - Don't give up hope! Keep the faith!
  - One day, salvation will come for us. Maybe even tomorrow!
- But... (you knew a but was coming)
  - I don't see "hoping for tomorrow" in the teachings of Jesus
  - Or even in the teachings of Paul
  - Look at the 2 Corinthians reading. He says it twice: "*Now* is the acceptable time. See, *today* is the day of salvation!"
- Paul was not hoping for a future outcome. Paul was immersed in *today*.
  - In fact, I would even venture to say that Paul had no future.
  - Just like St. Michael's has no future.
  - Just like I have no future.

- Because, in my opinion, there *is no future*.
- Perhaps you disagree with me, but I would argue that you can't even talk about the future.
- We all think we can. We think we have a thing in English called the "future tense" but we don't.
- "I will" go to the Royals game this afternoon.
  - Is that a certain description of future events? No.
  - It literally means, "My will is to go to the Royals game." It is my *present will* to go.
  - There are other ways. "I am going to" or "I plan to" or "I'm fixin' to". Same problem.
- The future doesn't exist. You and I don't know the future, because there is nothing *to know*.
  - Which means, Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah don't know the future.
  - Which also mean, God doesn't know the future.
  - I know this sounds scandalous, but bear with me.
- God knows everything there is to know.
  - But God does not know information that doesn't exist.

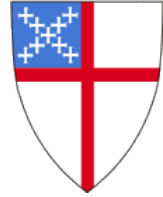
- What does the number four smell like?
- God doesn't know. Because there's nothing *to know*.
- OK, this sounds like an obtuse philosophical rant, but there's a point.
  - We, as humans, can easily get caught up in our predictions.
  - The Israelite soldiers listening to Goliath's taunts were all scared to death
  - Because they believed they knew the outcome already: Mess with Goliath and die.
  - The disciples in the boat, in today's gospel passage were all scared to death
  - Because they believed they knew the outcome already.  
Nobody survives a storm like this. "Don't you care that we are perishing?"
- But David and Jesus, respectively, knew that the outcome was not fixed.
  - They both understood that the future is there to be shaped by our choices.

- So David trusted that, with God’s help, he could create a different future.
- And Jesus trusted that, with the power of the Spirit, he could create a different future.
- I was a little hard on my camp counselor in that story at the beginning. And on all the Pentecostal leaders at that camp.
  - True, there was an allure to the drama of declaring something over people.
  - Have you ever declared something over someone? It’s exciting.
  - But when they told every single kid that God had a special purpose for them, they were right.
  - And the natural reaction for those kids is to say “oh really, what is it? Pastor? Missionary? Worship Leader? What?”
- But here’s the catch: We don’t know. God doesn’t even know.
  - God knows you better than you can possibly imagine. And God knows everything in creation better than we can imagine.
  - But your future really is up to you.

- You have no future.
- Because it doesn't exist, until you create it.
- May we all look to God our Creator for the power and wisdom to create a future that reflects his love for the world.
- Amen.



The Lessons Appointed for Use on the  
**Sunday closest to June 22**



Proper 7  
Year B  
RCL

*Track 1*

*or*

*Track 2*

1 Samuel 17: (1a, 4-11, 19-23), 32-49

Psalm 9:9-20

*or*

1 Samuel 17:57-18:5, 10-16

Psalm 133

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Mark 4:35-41

Job 38:1-11

Psalm 107:1-3, 23-

32

2 Corinthians 6:1-

13

Mark 4:35-41

## The Collect

O Lord, make us have perpetual love and reverence for your holy Name, for you never fail to help and govern those whom you have set upon the sure foundation of your lovingkindness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## Old Testament

### 1 Samuel 17: ~~(1a, 4-11, 19-23)~~, 32-49

~~[The Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height~~

was six cubits and a span. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield-bearer went before him. He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." And the Philistine said, "Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together." When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, took the provisions, and went as Jesse had commanded him. He came to the encampment as the army was going forth to the battle line, shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage, ran to the ranks, and went and greeted his brothers. As he talked with them, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines, and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.]

David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this

uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.” David said, “The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.” So Saul said to David, “Go, and may the LORD be with you!” Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. David strapped Saul’s sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, “I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them.” So David removed them. Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd’s bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. The Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field.” But David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s and he will give you into our hand.”

When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

## The Psalm

### Psalm 9:9-20

#### *Confitebor tibi*

- 9 The LORD will be a refuge for the oppressed, \*  
a refuge in time of trouble.
- 10 Those who know your Name will put their trust in you, \*  
for you never forsake those who seek you, O LORD.
- 11 Sing praise to the LORD who dwells in Zion; \*  
proclaim to the peoples the things he has done.
- 12 The Avenger of blood will remember them; \*  
he will not forget the cry of the afflicted.
- 13 Have pity on me, O LORD; \*  
see the misery I suffer from those who hate me,  
O you who lift me up from the gate of death;
- 14 So that I may tell of all your praises  
and rejoice in your salvation \*  
in the gates of the city of Zion.
- 15 The ungodly have fallen into the pit they dug, \*  
and in the snare they set is their own foot caught.
- 16 The LORD is known by his acts of justice; \*  
the wicked are trapped in the works of their own hands.
- 17 The wicked shall be given over to the grave, \*  
and also all the peoples that forget God.
- 18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten, \*  
and the hope of the poor shall not perish for ever.
- 19 Rise up, O LORD, let not the ungodly have the upper hand; \*  
let them be judged before you.

20 Put fear upon them, O LORD; \*  
let the ungodly know they are but mortal.

## **The Epistle**

### **2 Corinthians 6:1-13**

As we work together with Christ, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,

“At an acceptable time I have listened to you,  
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see-- we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. In return-- I speak as to children-- open wide your hearts also.

## **The Gospel**

### **Mark 4:35-41**

When evening had come, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

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*Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.*

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