

What Are You Doing Here?

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October 20, 2024

The Twenty-Second 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.

- “What are you all doing here?” Don’t answer that. Yet.
- Maybe you’ve seen a series of sketches on SNL called The Californians.
 - The funniest part is how the characters constantly talk about what roads they took to get here, and how everything is constantly “jammed”
 - I’m told this is pretty accurate. People in Los Angeles are always talking about roads and traffic.
 - But the most famous line that they used in every sketch was: “What are you doing here?”
 - And it’s invariably followed by telling that person exactly what route they should take to “get out of here”
- It reminds me of an old story about Rabbi Akiva, one of the great sages of First-Century Judaism
 - It might be just as fictional as the SNL sketch, but still a great story.
 - Rabbi Akiva was walking home from the Synagogue one evening
 - So lost in his own thoughts that he takes a wrong turn and suddenly hears a voice booming down on him from above
 - “Who are you? What are you doing here?”
 - It shook the rabbi and confused him. “What?” he shouted into the air.
 - “Who are you? What are you doing here?”
 - Rabbi Akiva realized that it was a Roman guard, standing above him on the wall of a Roman garrison. So he took a breath and collected his thoughts. Then, in true rabbi style, he answered the question with a question of his own.
 - “How much do they pay you to ask me these questions?”
 - Now it was the soldier’s turn to be confused. But he answered anyway: “Two drachma per week. Why?”

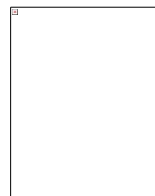
- “I will pay you four, if you stand outside my house instead, and ask me these questions every morning.”
- Remember how I started this sermon?
 - But asking you What are you all doing here?
 - The answers in your mind were probably pretty simple.
 - “Um... It’s Sunday morning. At church. We’re here for church.”
 - But sometimes I like to ask questions like a five-year old.
 - Why? – Because Christians go to Church. Why? – Because Jesus told us to. Why? – So we can worship him and learn about God. Why?
- Sometimes I wonder if we could use a Roman soldier outside our door shouting at us: Who are you? What are you doing here?
 - Although that might be considered bad hospitality.
 - Probably a great way to keep Visitors from coming back. Or even from coming in.
 - But those of us who are regulars might actually benefit
 - I know what I’m doing here. I work here.
 - You all pay me to do this. Thank you, by the way. I love my job and I’m thankful to be able to do it here.
 - But what are *you* doing here?
- I can imagine Jesus asking this question to James and John
 - After they ask Jesus if they can sit at his right and left hand in the kingdom.
 - “Is that why you’re here? For status? For power?”
 - But James and John seem like good kids. I doubt they thought it through and decided, hey let’s get some status and power out of this.
 - They probably just weren’t thinking about Jesus’ true purpose for them.
- Maybe James and John needed a Roman guard to shout questions at them.
 - What answers would we give to that question?
 - “I’m here to help those in need.” Well then we should be doing that instead right now

- “I’m here to be part of a community.” Then we could just be having brunch right now
- “I’m here to pray.” That’s easier to do at home.
- “I’m here to follow Jesus.” OK, let’s take another look at Jesus then.
- Our reading from Hebrews tells us a lot about Jesus’ purpose.
 - As if to answer the question: Does Jesus know why he’s here?
 - The writer of Hebrews makes it very clear that Jesus’ purpose is an exalted one—a glorified one.
 - Priest in the order of Melchizedek. That means he is great high priest—not just over Israel but over all of humanity.
 - That’s pretty glorious.
 - But the writer of Hebrews makes it extra clear that Jesus “Didn’t glorify himself”
 - Unlike some disciples we know...
- Looking back at the Gospel reading, we can see that Jesus knew what he was doing there
 - “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve”
 - He didn’t come for status, though he deserves status
 - He didn’t come for power, though he had all the power
 - No, despite all the lofty and glorious roles Jesus might have assumed, instead he came and simply said
 - “I’m here to help.”
 - Imagine if Tom Hanks or Taylor Swift or Joe Biden showed up at your house and offered to clean out your gutters.
 - You might be a little shocked. And you’d be right to ask them, “What are you doing here?”
- This is how Jesus comes to us. Knowing his purpose.
 - And then asking for ours.
 - Jesus wants to know. The world wants to know.
 - But in our habits and routines we may be forgetting to ask it ourselves.
 - “What are we doing here?”

- The easy answer is to say what Jesus said
 - We are here, not to be served, but to serve
 - But again, we could serve anywhere
 - We don't need to be a church, we could be Habitat for Humanity, or the United Way, or Community Services League, or any one of thousands of great organizations
- But when we decided to become followers of Jesus
 - We acknowledged that it's not that simple
 - We have a lot to give, but we have a lot to receive as well
 - Jesus said "Come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."
 - There's a reason why we, as human beings, so often default to ego, like Job in our OT reading
 - Or default to status-seeking like James and John
 - Because we are weary and heavy-laden
 - We don't need status. We need Healing.
 - The world has broken us, it has worn us out and burdened us down, to the point that we cannot simply get up and serve.
 - We need Healing, and we need Hope.
- And yes, I said I'm here because this is my job
 - But I need Healing and Hope too.
 - I want to serve like Jesus
 - But first I need a reason to believe that my service even matters. To believe that I can actually make difference, despite everything I've been through. Despite everything the world has done to keep me bottled up.
 - This is what Jesus is inviting us into.
- What are we doing here?
 - We are here to find the healing of Jesus.
 - We are here to find the hope of Jesus.
 - And once we have it, we are here to give it away. Amen.

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the
Sunday closest to October 19

Proper 24
Year B
RCL



Track 1 *or* *Track 2*

Job 38:1-7, (34-41)

Psalm 104:1-9, 25,

37b

Hebrews 5:1-10

Mark 10:35-45

Isaiah 53:4-12

Psalm 91:9-16

Hebrews 5:1-10

Mark 10:35-45

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ you have revealed your glory among the nations: Preserve the works of your mercy, that your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament

Job 38:1-7, (34-41)

The LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:

"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Gird up your loins like a man,

I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone
when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

[“Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,
so that a flood of waters may cover you?
Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go
and say to you, ‘Here we are’?
Who has put wisdom in the inward parts,
or given understanding to the mind?
Who has the wisdom to number the clouds?
Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens,
when the dust runs into a mass
and the clods cling together?

“Can you hunt the prey for the lion,
or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,
when they crouch in their dens,
or lie in wait in their covert?
Who provides for the raven its prey,
when its young ones cry to God,
and wander about for lack of food?”]

The Psalm

Psalm 104:1-9, 25, 37b

Benedic, anima mea

- 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul; *
O LORD my God, how excellent is your greatness!
you are clothed with majesty and splendor.
- 2 You wrap yourself with light as with a cloak *
and spread out the heavens like a curtain.
- 3 You lay the beams of your chambers in the waters above; *
you make the clouds your chariot;
you ride on the wings of the wind.
- 4 You make the winds your messengers *
and flames of fire your servants.
- 5 You have set the earth upon its foundations, *
so that it never shall move at any time.
- 6 You covered it with the Deep as with a mantle; *
the waters stood higher than the mountains.
- 7 At your rebuke they fled; *
at the voice of your thunder they hastened away.
- 8 They went up into the hills and down to the valleys beneath, *
to the places you had appointed for them.
- 9 You set the limits that they should not pass; *
they shall not again cover the earth.
- 25 O LORD, how manifold are your works! *
in wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
- 37b Hallelujah!

The Epistle

Hebrews 5:1-10

Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own

sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;
as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.”

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

The Gospel

Mark 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to Jesus and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. **For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.**”

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

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