

## **Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 17**

The Collect and Psalms will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer. The Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel will be read from The Easy to Read Bible.

**The Collect:** O God, because without you we are not able to please you mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **Track 1 Old Testament: Exodus 14:19-31**

19 Then the angel of God moved to the back of the people. (The angel was usually in front of the people, leading them.) So the tall cloud moved from in front of the people and went to the back of the people. 20 In this way the cloud stood between the Egyptians and the Israelites. There was light for the Israelites. But there was darkness for the Egyptians. So the Egyptians did not come any closer to the Israelites that night.

21 Moses raised his hand over the Red Sea, and the Lord caused a strong wind to blow from the east. The wind blew all night long. The sea split, and the wind made the ground dry. 22 The Israelites went through the sea on dry land. The water was like a wall on their right and on their left. 23 Then all of Pharaoh's chariots and horse soldiers followed them into the sea. 24 Early that morning the Lord looked down from the tall cloud and column of fire at the Egyptian army. Then he made them panic. 25 The wheels of the chariots became stuck. It was very hard to control the chariots. The Egyptians shouted, "Let's get out of here! The Lord is fighting against us. He is fighting for the Israelites."

26 Then the Lord told Moses, "Raise your hand over the sea to make the water fall and cover the Egyptian chariots and horse soldiers."

27 So just before daylight, Moses raised his hand over the sea. And the water rushed back to its proper level. The Egyptians were running as fast as they could from the water, but the Lord swept them away with the sea. 28 The water returned to its normal level and covered the chariots and horse soldiers. Pharaoh's army had been chasing the Israelites, but that

army was destroyed. None of them survived!

29 But the Israelites crossed the sea on dry land. The water was like a wall on their right and on their left. 30 So that day the Lord saved the Israelites from the Egyptians. Later, the Israelites saw the dead bodies of the Egyptians on the shore of the Red Sea. 31 The Israelites saw the great power of the Lord when he defeated the Egyptians. So the people feared and respected the Lord, and they began to trust the Lord and his servant Moses.

**Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people**

**Track 1 Psalm: Psalm 114 or Exodus 15:1b-11,20-21**

**Psalm 114**

1 Hallelujah!

When Israel came out of Egypt, \*  
the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech,

2 Judah became God's sanctuary \*  
and Israel his dominion.

3 The sea beheld it and fled; \*  
Jordan turned and went back.

4 The mountains skipped like rams, \*  
and the little hills like young sheep.

5 What ailed you, O sea, that you fled? \*  
O Jordan, that you turned back?

6 You mountains, that you skipped like rams? \*  
you little hills like young sheep?

7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, \*  
at the presence of the God of Jacob,

8 Who turned the hard rock into a pool of water \*  
and flint-stone into a flowing spring.

**Exodus 15: 1b – 11, 20 – 21**

1 Then Moses and the Israelites began singing this song to the LORD:

“I will sing to the LORD! He has done great things. He threw horse and rider into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength. He saves me, and I sing songs of praise to him. He is my God, and I praise him. He is the God of my ancestors, and I honor him.

3 The LORD is a great soldier. The LORD is his name.

4 He threw Pharaoh’s chariots and soldiers into the sea. Pharaoh’s very best soldiers drowned in the Red Sea.

5 The deep water covered them, and they sank to the bottom like rocks.

6 “LORD, your right hand is amazingly strong. With your right hand, LORD, you broke the enemy to pieces.

7 In your great majesty you destroyed those who stood against you. Your anger destroyed them, like fire burning straw.

8 The wind you sent in anger piled the water high. The flowing water became a wall, solid to its deepest parts.

9 “The enemy said, ‘I’ll chase them and catch them. I’ll take all their riches. I’ll take it all with my sword. I’ll take everything for myself.’

10 But you blew on them and covered them with the sea. They sank like lead into the deep sea.

11 “Are there any gods like the LORD? No, there are no gods like you—you are wonderfully holy! You are amazingly powerful! You do great miracles!

20 Then Aaron’s sister, the woman prophet Miriam, took a tambourine. She and the women began singing and dancing.

21 Miriam repeated the words, “Sing to the LORD! He has done great things. He threw horse and rider into the sea ....”

## **Track 2 Old Testament: Genesis 50:15-21**

15 After Jacob died, Joseph’s brothers were worried. They were afraid that Joseph would still be mad at them for what they had done years before. They said, “Maybe Joseph still hates us for what we did.” 16 So the brothers sent this message to Joseph: “Before your

father died, he told us to give you a message. 17 He said, 'Tell Joseph that I beg him to please forgive his brothers for the bad things they did to him.' So now Joseph, we beg you, please forgive us for the bad things we did to you. We are the servants of God, the God of your father."

That message made Joseph very sad, and he cried. 18 His brothers went to him and bowed down in front of him. They said, "We will be your servants."

19 Then Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. I am not God! I have no right to punish you. 20 It is true that you planned to do something bad to me. But really, God was planning good things. God's plan was to use me to save the lives of many people. And that is what happened. 21 So don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your children." And so Joseph said kind things to his brothers, and this made them feel better.

### **Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people**

#### **Track 2 Psalm: Psalm 103:(1-7), 8-13**

- 1 [Bless the Lord, O my soul, \*  
and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.
- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, \*  
and forget not all his benefits.
- 3 He forgives all your sins \*  
and heals all your infirmities;
- 4 He redeems your life from the grave \*  
and crowns you with mercy and loving-kindness;
- 5 He satisfies you with good things, \*  
and your youth is renewed like an eagle's.
- 6 The Lord executes righteousness \*  
and judgment for all who are oppressed.
- 7 He made his ways known to Moses \*  
and his works to the children of Israel.]
- 8 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, \*

slow to anger and of great kindness.

9 He will not always accuse us, \*

nor will he keep his anger for ever.

10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, \*

nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.

11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, \*

so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.

12 As far as the east is from the west, \*

so far has he removed our sins from us.

13 As a father cares for his children, \*

so does the Lord care for those who fear him.

### **Epistle: Romans 14:1-12**

Be willing to accept those who still have doubts about what believers can do. And don't argue with them about their different ideas. 2 Some people believe they can eat any kind of food, but those who have doubts eat only vegetables. 3 Those who know they can eat any kind of food must not feel that they are better than those who eat only vegetables. And those who eat only vegetables must not decide that those who eat all foods are wrong. God has accepted them. 4 You cannot judge the servants of someone else. Their own master decides if they are doing right or wrong. And the Lord's servants will be right, because the Lord is able to make them right.

5 Some people might believe that one day is more important than another. And others might believe that every day is the same. Everyone should be sure about their beliefs in their own mind. 6 Those who think one day is more important than other days are doing that for the Lord. And those who eat all kinds of food are doing that for the Lord. Yes, they give thanks to God for that food. And those who refuse to eat some foods do that for the Lord. They also give thanks to God.

7 We don't live or die just for ourselves. 8 If we live, we are living for the Lord. And if we die, we are dying for the Lord. So living or dying, we belong to the Lord. 9 That is why Christ

died and rose from death to live again—so that he could be Lord over those who have died and those who are living.

10 So why do you judge your brother or sister in Christ? Or why do you think that you are better than they are? We will all stand before God, and he will judge us all. 11 Yes, the Scriptures say,

“As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,  
‘Everyone will bow before me;  
everyone will say that I am God.’”

12 So each of us will have to explain to God about the things we do.

**Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people**

**Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35**

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, when someone won’t stop doing wrong to me, how many times must I forgive them? Seven times?”

22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, you must forgive them more than seven times. You must continue to forgive them even if they do wrong to you seventy-seven times.

23 “So God’s kingdom is like a king who decided to collect the money his servants owed him. 24 The king began to collect his money. One servant owed him several thousand pounds of silver. 25 He was not able to pay the money to his master, the king. So the master ordered that he and everything he owned be sold, even his wife and children. The money would be used to pay the king what the servant owed.

26 “But the servant fell on his knees and begged, ‘Be patient with me. I will pay you everything I owe.’ 27 The master felt sorry for him. So he told the servant he did not have to pay. He let him go free.

28 “Later, that same servant found another servant who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him around the neck and said, ‘Pay me the money you owe me!’

29 “The other servant fell on his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me. I will pay you everything I owe.’

30 “But the first servant refused to be patient. He told the judge that the other servant owed him money, and that servant was put in jail until he could pay everything he owed. 31 All the other servants saw what happened. They felt very sorry for the man. So they went and told their master everything that happened.

32 “Then the master called his servant in and said, ‘You evil servant. You begged me to forgive your debt, and I said you did not have to pay anything! 33 So you should have given that other man who serves with you the same mercy I gave you.’ 34 The master was very angry, so he put the servant in jail to be punished. And he had to stay in jail until he could pay everything he owed.

35 “This king did the same as my heavenly Father will do to you. You must forgive your brother or sister with all your heart, or my heavenly Father will not forgive you.”

## **The Gospel of the Lord**

**Closing Prayer: On September 23 we celebrate the life of Thecla Apostle and Proto-martyr among Women. Read from A Great Cloud of Witnesses.**

Thecla, widely known as a disciple of the apostle Paul, was one of the most popular female saints in the early Church. Her story is told in the second-century Acts of Paul and Thecla. According to this narrative, upon hearing Paul preach the gospel, Thecla abandoned her plans for marriage and followed Paul. Condemned to burn at the stake, her life was saved by a miraculous thunderstorm. As her adventures continued, she was thrown to the beasts in the local arena. There she was protected by a fierce lioness. Finally, thinking this was her last chance to be baptized, she threw herself into a pool with ravenous seals and baptized

herself in the water, while the seals were struck dead by lightning. The governor then released her, and she went on to travel and preach the gospel.

According to Tertullian (writing in about the year 200), early Christian women appealed to Thecla's example to defend women's freedom to teach and to baptize. A shrine to Thecla in Seleucia (Asia Minor) became a popular pilgrimage site in the fourth and fifth centuries. Devotion to Thecla from Gaul to Palestine is also evident in literature, art, and the practice of naming children after her. Her image appeared on wall paintings, clay flasks, oil lamps, stone reliefs, textile curtains, and other media.

**Let us pray:** God of liberating power, you raised up your apostle Thecla, who allowed no obstacle or peril to inhibit her from bearing witness to new life in Jesus Christ: Empower courageous evangelists among us, that men and women everywhere may experience the freedom you offer; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**