

## **Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, July 30**

The Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel will be read from The Message.

The Collect and Psalms will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer.

**The Collect:** O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### **Track 1 Old Testament: Genesis 29:15-28**

When Jacob had been with him for a month, Laban said, “Just because you’re my nephew, you shouldn’t work for me for nothing. Tell me what you want to be paid. What’s a fair wage?”

16-18 Now Laban had two daughters; Leah was the older and Rachel the younger. Leah had nice eyes, but Rachel was stunningly beautiful. And it was Rachel that Jacob loved. So Jacob answered, “I will work for you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.”

19 “It is far better,” said Laban, “that I give her to you than marry her to some outsider. Yes. Stay here with me.”

20 So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel. But it only seemed like a few days, he loved her so much.

21-24 Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife; I’ve completed what we agreed I’d do. I’m ready to consummate my marriage.” Laban invited everyone around and threw a big feast. At evening, though, he got his daughter Leah and brought her to the marriage bed, and Jacob slept with her. (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maid.)

25 Morning came: There was Leah in the marriage bed!

Jacob confronted Laban, “What have you done to me? Didn’t I work all this time for the

hand of Rachel? Why did you cheat me?"

26-27 "We don't do it that way in our country," said Laban. "We don't marry off the younger daughter before the older. Enjoy your week of honeymoon, and then we'll give you the other one also. But it will cost you another seven years of work."

28 Jacob agreed. When he'd completed the honeymoon week, Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.

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

#### **Track 1 Psalm: Psalm 105:1-11, 45b or Psalm 128**

1 Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name; \*  
make known his deeds among the peoples.

2 Sing to him, sing praises to him, \*  
and speak of all his marvelous works.

3 Glory in his holy Name; \*  
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

4 Search for the Lord and his strength; \*  
continually seek his face.

5 Remember the marvels he has done, \*  
his wonders and the judgments of his mouth,

6 O offspring of Abraham his servant, \*  
O children of Jacob his chosen.

7 He is the Lord our God; \*  
his judgments prevail in all the world.

8 He has always been mindful of his covenant, \*  
the promise he made for a thousand generations:

9 The covenant he made with Abraham, \*  
the oath that he swore to Isaac,

10 Which he established as a statute for Jacob, \*  
an everlasting covenant for Israel,

11 Saying, “To you will I give the land of Canaan \*  
to be your allotted inheritance.”

45b Hallelujah!

### **Or Psalm 128**

1 Happy are they all who fear the Lord, \*  
and who follow in his ways!

2 You shall eat the fruit of your labor; \*  
happiness and prosperity shall be yours.

3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, \*  
your children like olive shoots round about your table.

4 The man who fears the Lord \*  
shall thus indeed be blessed.

5 The Lord bless you from Zion, \*  
and may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

6 May you live to see your children’s children; \*  
may peace be upon Israel.

### **Track 2 Old Testament: 1 Kings 3:5-12**

That night, there in Gibeon, God appeared to Solomon in a dream: God said, “What can I give you? Ask.”

6 Solomon said, “You were extravagantly generous in love with David my father, and he lived faithfully in your presence, his relationships were just and his heart right. And you have persisted in this great and generous love by giving him—and this very day!—a son to sit on his throne.

7-8 “And now here I am: God, my God, you have made me, your servant, ruler of the kingdom in place of David my father. I’m too young for this, a mere child! I don’t know the ropes, hardly know the ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ of this job. And here I am, set down in the middle of the people you’ve chosen, a great people—far too many to ever count.

9 “Here’s what I want: Give me a God-listening heart so I can lead your people well, discerning the difference between good and evil. For who on their own is capable of leading your glorious people?”

10-12 God, the Master, was delighted with Solomon’s response. And God said to him, “Because you have asked for this and haven’t grasped after a long life, or riches, or the doom of your enemies, but you have asked for the ability to lead and govern well, I’ll give you what you’ve asked for—I’m giving you a wise and mature heart. There’s never been one like you before; and there’ll be no one after.

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

#### **Track 2 Psalm: Psalm 119:129-136**

- 129 Your decrees are wonderful; \*  
therefore I obey them with all my heart.
- 130 When your word goes forth it gives light; \*  
it gives understanding to the simple.
- 131 I open my mouth and pant; \*  
I long for your commandments.
- 132 Turn to me in mercy, \*  
as you always do to those who love your Name.
- 133 Steady my footsteps in your word; \*  
let no iniquity have dominion over me.
- 134 Rescue me from those who oppress me, \*  
and I will keep your commandments.
- 135 Let your countenance shine upon your servant \*  
and teach me your statutes.
- 136 My eyes shed streams of tears, \*  
because people do not keep your law.

## **Epistle: Romans 8:26-39**

26-28 Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

29-30 God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.

31-39 So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us! —is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you.

We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way

that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

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

### **Gospel: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52**

31-32 Another story. “God’s kingdom is like an acorn that a farmer plants. It is quite small as seeds go, but in the course of years it grows into a huge oak tree, and eagles build nests in it.”

33 Another story. “God’s kingdom is like yeast that a woman works into the dough for dozens of loaves of barley bread—and waits while the dough rises.”

44 “God’s kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field for years and then accidentally found by a trespasser. The finder is ecstatic—what a find!—and proceeds to sell everything he owns to raise money and buy that field.

45-46 “Or, God’s kingdom is like a jewel merchant on the hunt for exquisite pearls. Finding one that is flawless, he immediately sells everything and buys it.

47-50 “Or, God’s kingdom is like a fishnet cast into the sea, catching all kinds of fish. When it is full, it is hauled onto the beach. The good fish are picked out and put in a tub; those unfit to eat are thrown away. That’s how it will be when the curtain comes down on history. The angels will come and cull the bad fish and throw them in the garbage. There will be a lot of desperate complaining, but it won’t do any good.”

51 Jesus asked, “Are you starting to get a handle on all this?”

They answered, “Yes.”

52 He said, “Then you see how every student well-trained in God’s kingdom is like the owner of a general store who can put his hands on anything you need, old or new, exactly when you need it.”

## **The Gospel of the Lord**

**On August 3 we celebrate the life of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, Sociologist. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.**

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born on February 23, 1868, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Du Bois is remembered for his powerful advocacy for the civil rights of African Americans and for his writings on their spiritual life.

Raised as a Congregationalist, Du Bois maintained great affection for The Episcopal Church of his grandparents and, in the 1950s, he attended Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Brooklyn, New York. Throughout his career, Du Bois invoked the faith of African Americans and the centrality of the Church in their communities as key to overcoming institutionalized racism in the United States. With the publication of *The Souls of Black Folks* in 1903, many African Americans heralded him as a contemporary prophet. In this book, Du Bois dismantled the prevailing cultural and religious assumptions of white Americans that African Americans were spiritually and morally inferior beings. Anticipating black liberation theology, Du Bois articulated an Afrocentric religious perspective in which African Americans were the bearers of spiritual insight from which white Americans must learn. Alongside the Bible, *The Souls of Black Folk* became a touchstone for African American identity in the twentieth century.

In 1906, he worked with others toward “organized determination and aggressive action on the part of men who believe in Negro freedom and growth.” The result was the so-called “Niagara Movement” (named for the group’s first meeting site, which was shifted to Canada when they were prevented from meeting in the U.S.), the objectives of which were to advocate for civil justice and oppose discrimination. In 1909, most of the group members merged with white supporters, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was formed.

Du Bois had deeply held religious convictions grounded in the liberal Christianity of his era, but he consistently criticized institutional churches, black and white alike, for overweening concern on external displays of religiosity and materialism. In his later years, Du Bois was a Communist and remained a reluctant defender of Joseph Stalin when most on the American

Left had denounced him. Yet during these very same years Du Bois maintained that Christianity's vision of justice and peace represented the highest ethical standards for humanity.

A leading participant in the Pan-African movement, Du Bois renounced his American citizenship and moved to Ghana, where he died on August 27, 1963, on the eve of the March on Washington. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote of Du Bois, "His singular greatness lay in his quest for truth about his own people. There were very few scholars who concerned themselves with honest study of the black man, and he sought to fill the immense void."

**Let us pray:** Gracious God, kindle in your Church a zeal for justice and the dignity of all, that we, following the example of your servant William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, may have the grace to defend all the oppressed and maintain the cause of those who have been silenced; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**