

## **Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost, Sept. 5**

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 International Children's Bible.

**The Collect:** Almighty and merciful God, it is only by your gift that your faithful people offer you true and laudable service: Grant that we may run without stumbling to obtain your heavenly promises; 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: Joshua 3:7-17**

7 Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to make you a great man to all the Israelites. So the people will know I am with you just as I was with Moses. 8 The priests will carry the Ark of the Covenant. Tell them this: 'Go to the edge of the Jordan River and stand in the water.'"

9 Then Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come here. Listen to the words of the Lord your God. 10 Here is proof that the living God is with you. Here is proof that he will drive out the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and the Jebusites. 11 This is the proof: The Ark of the Covenant will go ahead of you into the Jordan River. It is the Agreement with the Lord of the whole world. 12 Now choose 12 men from among you. Choose 1 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. 13 The priests will carry the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, the Master of the whole world. They will carry it into the Jordan ahead of you. When they enter the water, the river will stop flowing. The water will be stopped. It will stand up in a heap as if a dam were there."

14 So the priests carried the Ark of the Covenant. And the people left the place where they had camped. Then they started across the Jordan River. 15 During harvest the Jordan is flooded. So the river was at its fullest. The priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant came to the edge of the river. And they stepped into the water. 16 Just at that moment, the water stopped flowing. It stood up in a heap a great distance away at Adam. This is a town near Zarethan. The water flowing down to the Sea of Arabah (the Dead Sea)

was completely cut off. So the people crossed the river near Jericho. 17 The ground there became dry. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant with the Lord to the middle of the river and stopped. They waited there while all the people of Israel walked across. They crossed the Jordan River on dry land.

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

#### **Track 1 Psalm: Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37**

- 1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, \*  
and his mercy endures for ever.
- 2 Let all those whom the Lord has redeemed proclaim \*  
that he redeemed them from the hand of the foe.
- 3 He gathered them out of the lands; \*  
from the east and from the west,  
from the north and from the south.
- 4 Some wandered in desert wastes; \*  
they found no way to a city where they might dwell.
- 5 They were hungry and thirsty; \*  
their spirits languished within them.
- 6 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, \*  
and he delivered them from their distress.
- 7 He put their feet on a straight path \*  
to go to a city where they might dwell.
- 33 The Lord changed rivers into deserts, \*  
and water-springs into thirsty ground,
- 34 A fruitful land into salt flats, \*  
because of the wickedness of those who dwell there.
- 35 He changed deserts into pools of water \*  
and dry land into water-springs.
- 36 He settled the hungry there, \*  
and they founded a city to dwell in.
- 37 They sowed fields, and planted vineyards, \*

and brought in a fruitful harvest.

## **Track 2 Old Testament: Micah 3:5-12**

5 The Lord says this about the prophets who teach his people the wrong way of living:

“If someone gives these prophets food to eat,  
they shout, ‘Peace!’

But if he doesn’t give them food,  
they prepare for war against him.

6 So it will become like night to the prophets.  
They won’t have any visions from the Lord.  
It will become dark for them.

They won’t be able to tell what will happen in the future.  
The sun is about to set for the prophets.  
Their days will become dark.

7 The seers will be ashamed.  
The people who see the future will be embarrassed.  
Yes, all of them will cover their mouths.  
This is because there will be no answer from God.”

8 But the Lord’s Spirit has filled me  
with power and strength to preach fairness.  
I will tell the people of Jacob how they have turned against God.  
I will tell the people of Israel how they have done wrong.

9 Leaders of Jacob and rulers of Israel,  
listen to me.

You hate fairness.  
You destroy what is right.

10 You build Jerusalem by murdering people.  
You build it with the sins you do.

11 The judges in Jerusalem take money  
to decide who wins in court.

The priests in Jerusalem only teach for pay.

The prophets only look into the future when they get paid.

But yet those leaders say,

“The Lord is with us.

Nothing bad will happen to us.”

12 Because of you,

Jerusalem will be plowed like a field.

Jerusalem will become a pile of rocks.

The hill on which the Temple stands will be covered with bushes.

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## **Track 2 Psalm: Psalm 43**

1 Give judgment for me, O God,

and defend my cause against an ungodly people; \*

deliver me from the deceitful and the wicked.

2 For you are the God of my strength;

why have you put me from you? \*

and why do I go so heavily while the enemy oppresses me?

3 Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead me, \*

and bring me to your holy hill

and to your dwelling;

4 That I may go to the altar of God,

to the God of my joy and gladness; \*

and on the harp I will give thanks to you, O God my God.

5 Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul? \*

and why are you so disquieted within me?

6 Put your trust in God; \*

for I will yet give thanks to him,

who is the help of my countenance, and my God.

### **Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13**

9 Brothers, I know that you remember how hard we worked. We worked night and day so that we would not burden any of you while we preached God's Good News to you.

10 When we were with you, we lived in a holy and right way, without fault. You know that this is true, and God knows that this is true. 11 You know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. 12 We strengthened you, we comforted you, and we told you to live good lives for God. It is God who calls you to his glorious kingdom.

13 Also, we always thank God because of the way you accepted his message. You heard his message from us, and you accepted it as the word of God, not the words of men. And it really is God's message. And that message works in you who believe.

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

### **Gospel: Matthew 23:1-12**

23 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his followers. Jesus said, 2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees have the authority to tell you what the law of Moses says. 3 So you should obey and follow whatever they tell you. But their lives are not good examples for you to follow. They tell you to do things, but they don't do the things themselves. 4 They make strict rules and try to force people to obey them. But they themselves will not try to follow any of those rules.

5 "The reason they do good things is so other people will see them. They make the boxes of Scriptures that they wear bigger and bigger. And they make their special prayer clothes very long so that people will notice them. 6 Those Pharisees and teachers of the law love to have the most important seats at the feasts. And they love to have the most important seats in the synagogues. 7 They love people to show respect to them in the marketplaces. And they love to have people call them 'Teacher.'

8 "But you must not be called 'Teacher.' You are all brothers and sisters together. You have only one Teacher. 9 And don't call any person on earth 'Father.' You have one Father. He is

in heaven. 10 And you should not be called 'Master.' You have only one Master, the Christ. 11 He who serves you as a servant is the greatest among you. 12 Whoever makes himself great will be made humble. Whoever makes himself humble will be made great.

## **The Gospel of the Lord**

**On November 8 we celebrate the life of James Theodore Holly Bishop of Haiti, and of the Dominican Republic. Read from A Great Cloud of Witnesses.**

James Theodore Augustus Holly was born a free African American in Washington, D.C., on October 3, 1829. Baptized and confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church, he later became an Episcopalian. Holly was ordained deacon at St. Matthew's Church in Detroit on June 17, 1855, and ordained a priest by the bishop of Connecticut on January 2, 1856. He was appointed rector of St. Luke's, New Haven. In the same year he founded the Protestant Episcopal Society for Promoting the Extension of the Church among Colored People, an antecedent of the Union of Black Episcopalians. He became a friend of Frederick Douglass, and the two men worked together on many programs.

In 1861, Holly resigned as rector of St. Luke's to lead a group of African Americans settling in Haiti. Although his wife, his mother, and two of his children died during the first year, along with other settlers, Holly stayed on with two small sons, proclaiming that just "as the last surviving apostle of Jesus was in tribulation ... on the forlorn isle of Patmos, so, by His Divine Providence, [Christ] had brought this tribulation upon me for a similar end in this isle in the Caribbean Sea." He welcomed the opportunity to speak of God's love to a people who needed to hear it.

Through an agreement between the House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church and the Orthodox Apostolic Church of Haiti, Holly was consecrated a missionary bishop to build the church in Haiti on November 8, 1874, making him the first African American to be raised to the office of bishop in The Episcopal Church. In 1878, Bishop Holly attended the Lambeth Conference, the first African American to do so, and he preached at Westminster Abbey on St. James' Day of that year. In the course of his ministry, he doubled the size of his diocese, and established medical clinics where none had been before.

Bishop Holly served the Diocese of Haiti until his death in Haiti on March 13, 1911. He had charge of the Diocese of the Dominican Republic as well, from 1897 until he died. He is buried on the grounds of St. Vincent's School for Handicapped Children in Port-au-Prince.

**Let us pray:** Most gracious God, we thank you that your servant James Theodore Holly labored to build a Church in which all might be free: Grant that, inspired by his testimony, we may overcome our prejudice and honor those whom you call from every family, language, people, and nation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**