

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 25

The Collect: Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory 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.

Track 1 Old Testament: 1 Kings 8:(1, 6, 10-11), 22-30, 41-43

Track 1 Psalm: Psalm 84

Track 2 Old Testament: Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

Track 2 Psalm: Psalm 34:15-22

Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-20

Gospel: John 6:56-69

On August 29 we celebrate the life of John Bunyan, writer. From *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*

John Bunyan was born in 1628 at Elstow in Bedfordshire, England. Little is known about his early life. His parents were poor; his father was a brazier, a trade that Bunyan also followed for a time. Bunyan had little to no formal education, and he may have learned to read English from reading the Bible. He served as a soldier in the Parliamentary army during the English Civil War, after which he married. His wife introduced him to Arthur Dent's *Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and Bishop Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety*, devotional books that set him on the religious path.

In 1653, he was baptized in the Bedford Baptist (Independent) Church, and was soon thereafter recognized as a preacher, a vocation at which he excelled. He claimed to have had visions similar to those of Teresa of Avila. After the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Bunyan was targeted and slandered by the new royalist government, along with many others who had supported the revolutionary cause during the Civil War. Under the laws of the restored Stuart regime, congregational meeting houses were closed and citizens were required to attend their Anglican parishes. It was punishable by law for anyone, except those who had been ordained according to Anglican orders, to conduct services or preach. Bunyan was arrested while preaching in 1660 and spent most of the next twelve years imprisoned in Bedford.

While imprisoned, Bunyan wrote the first part of his most famous work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, an allegorical story that was completed in 1684. *The Pilgrim's Progress* tells the story of Christian, a lonely pilgrim who must cross such treacherous terrain as the Slough of Despond and the River of Death before finally reaching the Land of Beulah. Along with John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, it was one of the most influential works of the seventeenth century, and retained its influence for several centuries thereafter. Bunyan died August 31, 1688.

Let us pray: God of peace, you called John Bunyan to be valiant for truth: Grant that we, having endured as strangers and pilgrims on this earth, may at last rejoice with all the faithful in your heavenly city; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**