

12th Sunday after Pentecost

**Occasion:** Proper 17

*Sunday, September 1, 2019*

**Year (cycle): C**

**Resource Website Links:**

[The Collect/Readings<sup>1</sup>](#)

[Book/Passage Summaries<sup>2</sup>](#)

[Reflection<sup>3</sup>](#)

**The Collect:**

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

## Reading 1

**Old Testament:**

Jeremiah 2:4-13

4 Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. 5 Thus says the Lord:

What wrong did your ancestors find in me

that they went far from me,

and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves?

6 They did not say, 'Where is the Lord

who brought us up from the land of Egypt,

who led us in the wilderness,

in a land of deserts and pits,

in a land of drought and deep darkness,

in a land that no one passes through,

where no one lives?'

7 I brought you into a plentiful land

to eat its fruits and its good things.

But when you entered you defiled my land,

and made my heritage an abomination.

8 The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?'

Those who handle the law did not know me;  
the rulers transgressed against me;  
the prophets prophesied by Baal,  
and went after things that do not profit.  
9 Therefore once more I accuse you,  
says the Lord,  
and I accuse your children's children.  
10 Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look,  
send to Kedar and examine with care;  
see if there has ever been such a thing.  
11 Has a nation changed its gods,  
even though they are no gods?  
But my people have changed their glory  
for something that does not profit.  
12 Be appalled, O heavens, at this,  
be shocked, be utterly desolate,  
says the Lord,  
13 for my people have committed two evils:  
they have forsaken me,  
the fountain of living water,  
and dug out cisterns for themselves,  
cracked cisterns  
that can hold no water.

### [Link to Passage Summary](#)

#### **Reflection:**

Jeremiah 2:4-13

In the second chapter of Jeremiah, God is laying out a case against the people of Jerusalem for straying and turning to other gods. What stands out to me in this passage, however, is how God is upset with them for failing to lament: "They did not say, 'Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt?'" And a few verses later, the prophet relays, "The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?'" In other words, the people stopped asking where God was, and the priests stopped reminding them to do so (see Rodney R. Hutton's footnote for Jeremiah 2:6-8 in *The New Oxford*

Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Oxford University Press, 2010).

God is calling attention to the fact that the people have ceased to complain to God! I love what this says about the importance of lament: it is an integral part of an intimate relationship with God. God not only expects but even desires that we voice our anguish when we feel God is absent. The cry in and of itself is an act of faith—it is a reaching out for God. At times we may feel guilty for wondering where God is and wanting to cry out, but in fact, this very cry embodies a faithfulness to the relationship.

- Does lament have a place in your prayer life?
- What cries of your heart might God be desiring you to voice?

## Reading 2

**Psalm 81:1, 10-16**

- 1 Sing with joy to God our strength \*  
and raise a loud shout to the God of Jacob.
- 10 I am the Lord your God,  
who brought you out of the land of Egypt and said, \*  
“Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.”
- 11 And yet my people did not hear my voice, \*  
and Israel would not obey me.
- 12 So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their hearts, \*  
to follow their own devices.
- 13 Oh, that my people would listen to me! \*  
that Israel would walk in my ways!
- 14 I should soon subdue their enemies \*  
and turn my hand against their foes.
- 15 Those who hate the Lord would cringe before him, \*  
and their punishment would last for ever.
- 16 But Israel would I feed with the finest wheat \*  
and satisfy him with honey from the rock.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

## Reflection:

Psalm 81: 1, 10-16

With the psalm, we move from lament to singing with joy. The psalmist recounts what God has done for God's people, bringing them out of slavery and feeding them abundantly in the desolate wilderness. The response one might expect to such loving care is a song of joy, and yet instead the people "follow their own devices," forgetting how present God has been. The last verse of this selection is particularly poignant: "But Israel would I feed with the finest wheat and satisfy him with honey from the rock." This tenderness calls to mind God's care for the house of Israel in Deuteronomy 32:11-13: "As an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions, the Lord alone guided him... He set him atop the heights of the land, and fed him with produce of the field; he nursed him with honey from the crags, with oil from flinty rock."

In both of these passages, one can hear God's readiness to nurture and care for Israel as a mother cares tenderly for her children, but in their distraction the people miss this loving hand extended to them.

- What "devices and desires of our own hearts" (Book of Common Prayer, p. 41) do you see causing us to overlook or stray from the loving care God offers us?

## Reading 3

### Epistle:

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

1 Let mutual love continue. 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. 3 Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. 4 Let marriage be held in honour by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.' 6 So we can say with confidence,

'The Lord is my helper;

I will not be afraid.

What can anyone do to me?'

7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. 15 Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

### [Link to Passage Summary](#)

#### **Reflection:**

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

In the final two chapters of Hebrews, the author gives clear-cut directions for how to walk in the way of Christ. If one thinks of Hebrews as an exhortation or sermon, this is the practical “how-to” section to wrap it up: “Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers... Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.”

In sum, these words are a reminder that together we make up the Body of Christ— and that consequently, whatever happens to one of us individually happens to all of us collectively. The challenge is to shape our lives with this awareness in mind—to actively live as though we know this to be true. Growing further into the awareness that our well being is tied up with others’ is a pattern of living we can practice, little by little.

- What is one shift you can make towards embodying the awareness that our well being is tied up with one another’s?

## Reading 4

#### **Gospel:**

Luke 14:1, 7-14

1 On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. 7 When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honour, he told them a parable. 8 ‘When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; 9 and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, “Give this person your place”, and then in

disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. 10But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, “Friend, move up higher”; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. 11For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’

12 He said also to the one who had invited him, ‘When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’

### [Link to Passage Summary](#)

#### **Reflection:**

Luke 14:1, 7-14

In this passage, Jesus is eating dinner at the home of a religious leader. The text notes that those present were “watching him closely,” but Jesus is observing them carefully as well. Luke says that when Jesus noticed how the guests were choosing places of honor, he was moved to speak in a parable. Throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus’ parables serve to shift his hearers’ thinking by ending in unexpected ways and helping his audience to see in a new light.

We can gather from this scene that one’s place at the table is important, as are honor and status. It also seems that then, like today, it was tempting to think one could only achieve honor and status by moving to the head of the table and asserting one’s place. What Jesus encourages, however, is to flip the norm and sit at the other end of the table. While this goes against the expected, it is a powerful action. After all, when a person of status takes a lower seat at the table, they are opening up seats for those who would never dare take a higher seat. They are indicating through their actions, without speaking a word, that they value those who might be considered “lower”. Jesus is helping them to see that the true honor is in lifting up others and that those who draw all the eyes in the room have a unique opportunity to elevate those who go unnoticed.

- Where might you use your status to make room for and lift up another?

## **Sources**

<sup>1</sup> “Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost, ” *The Episcopal Church*, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/lectionary/twelfth-sunday-after-pentecost-1>

<sup>2</sup> Chris Haslam, “Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost-September 1, 2019,” *Comments: Revised Lectionary Commentary*, <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/cpr22m.shtml?>

<sup>3</sup>Lucy Strandlund, “Pentecost 12 (C)-September 1, 2019, *Bible Study*, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/bible-study/bible-study-pentecost-12-c-september-1-2019>