

14th Sunday after Pentecost

Occasion: Proper 19

Sunday, September 15, 2019

Year (cycle): C

Resource Website Links:

[The Collect/Readings¹](#)

[Book/Passage Summaries²](#)

[Reflection³](#)

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.

Reading 1

Old Testament:

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

11 At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: A hot wind comes from me out of the bare heights in the desert towards my poor people, not to winnow or cleanse— 12a wind too strong for that. Now it is I who speak in judgement against them.

22 'For my people are foolish,
they do not know me;
they are stupid children,
they have no understanding.

They are skilled in doing evil,
but do not know how to do good.'

23 I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light.

24 I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking,
and all the hills moved to and fro.

25 I looked, and lo, there was no one at all,
and all the birds of the air had fled.

26 I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert,
and all its cities were laid in ruins

before the Lord, before his fierce anger.
27 For thus says the Lord: The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end.
28 Because of this the earth shall mourn,
and the heavens above grow black;
for I have spoken, I have purposed;
I have not relented nor will I turn back.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection:

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

This prophetic reading from Jeremiah paints a desolate image of the earth and the fate of those who live on it, and it hits uncomfortably close to our reality today. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released a **report** recently that July 2019 was the hottest month on record, measured by average global temperature. Here in Central Texas where I live, we've had multiple weeks with temperatures consistently topping 100 degrees. There is indeed a hot wind that blows, which brings home Jeremiah's words of warning in a palpable way. In the book of Jeremiah, God is asking God's people to turn back to God, to turn away from selfishness, greed, and shortsightedness, and to change their ways before destruction occurs.

It is clear that God's people must work with God to promote the flourishing of land, people, and all living creatures. Part of orienting oneself to God is taking better care of creation and one another in a way consistent with God's desires for both people and land to be fruitful and thriving.

- What small changes can you make to contribute to the flourishing of creation?

Reading 2

Psalm 14

1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." *
All are corrupt and commit abominable acts;
there is none who does any good.
2 The Lord looks down from heaven upon us all, *
to see if there is any who is wise,

if there is one who seeks after God.
3 Every one has proved faithless;
all alike have turned bad; *
there is none who does good; no, not one.
4 Have they no knowledge, all those evildoers *
who eat up my people like bread
and do not call upon the Lord?
5 See how they tremble with fear, *
because God is in the company of the righteous.
6 Their aim is to confound the plans of the afflicted, *
but the Lord is their refuge.
7 Oh, that Israel's deliverance would come out of Zion! *
when the Lord restores the fortunes of his people,
Jacob will rejoice and Israel be glad.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection:

Psalm 14

The psalmist says, "The Lord looks down from heaven upon us all, to see if there is any who is wise, if there is one who seeks after God" (Psalm 14:2, BCP). Note that in this passage, wisdom simply means seeking after God. God is looking for someone—anyone—who seeks the ways of God and wonders what God might have us do.

In this passage, there is a juxtaposition between those who exploit others, relying on their own ruthless strength, and those who look to God, honoring God's concern for the poor and downtrodden. The fruit of the former is corruption, while the fruit of the latter is joy.

To collaborate with God in caring for the poor and exploited is to contribute to deliverance and rejoicing. It is clear that the psalmist would like to be counted among God's collaborators and hopes to inspire us to seek the same.

- Amid competing voices and struggles for power, how do you discern what is the way of God?

Reading 3

Epistle:

1 Timothy 1:12-17

12 I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost. 16 But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. 17 To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection:

1 Timothy 1:12-17

This reading from 1 Timothy gives us a glimpse into someone who has turned from former exploitative, merciless ways and who makes it clear that it was abounding mercy, grace, faith, love, and patience that made all the difference. He says, “The grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 1:14, NRSV). This grace overflows from within and spills out into the world from the writer, offering the same sense of abundant mercy and love to others. This brief witness shows us that it is patient, merciful, loving presence that has the power to help us change our ways. When we have received that loving presence, we can then model it for others.

- When have you experienced patient, loving, and merciful presence? How might you offer it to others?

Reading 4

Gospel:

Luke 15:1-10

1 Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.

2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

3 So he told them this parable: 4 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

8 'Or what woman having ten silver coins,* if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?

9 When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection:

Luke 15:1-10

This passage may be discomfiting for those who have worked hard to be righteous, but it is a balm to those who feel they've lost their way.

Considering that each of us at some point will falter or feel lost, it is good news for all.

It harkens back to Jeremiah 50:6, in which God says, "My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray, turning them away on the mountains; from mountain to hill they have gone, they have forgotten their fold." "They have forgotten their fold" is a powerful statement for those who have wandered or been led astray. When we feel lost, in shame, doubt, or any other kind of spiritual desert, it is healing to remember that we still have a place to belong—a place where we are

welcomed, wanted, loved, and received with joy. And for those who feel assured of their belonging, it is good to remember that the fold always, always has room for one more.

- When have you felt lost or led astray? What helped you remember your place in “the fold”?

Sources

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

² Chris Haslam, “Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost-September 15, 2019,” *Comments: Revised Lectionary Commentary*, <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/cpr24m.shtml?>

³Lucy Strandlund, “Pentecost 14 (C)-September 15, 2019, *Bible Study*, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/bible-study/bible-study-pentecost-14-c-september-15-2019>