**St. Aidan’s Episcopal Church**

**16th Sunday after Pentecost**

[**Proverbs 1: 20-33**](https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp18_RCL.html#ot1)[**Psalm 19**](https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp18_RCL.html#ps1)[**James 3: 1-12**](https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp18_RCL.html#nt1)[**Mark 8:27-38**](https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp18_RCL.html#gsp1)

**Words of Wisdom**

The seventh verse of Psalm 19, which we just read reads:

**7 The law of the Lord is perfect
and revives the soul; \*
the testimony of the Lord is sure
and gives wisdom to the innocent.**

Or, we could say, there is no guile in God’s law, no underlying motive for God’s self. It is there, it exists for the revitalization of the soul of humankind, at any moment, in any life.

No matter how we find ourselves, how deeply immersed we are in our personal depths, or difficulties, or dilemmas, wondering where to turn, who to turn to, who it is we can trust, there is always one source of direction of which we can be sure. That is, God’s. When we pray to God for God’s guidance and directions, we can be sure that what we hear and receive is true. And to receive God’s word, to hear God’s call to follow, we find increasing understanding of our own childlike dependence on that Divine Wisdom. In our evolving Wisdom, we begin to let go of our own manipulations of our own directions and our manipulations of the directions of others. Our awareness of God’s direction in our individual lives, allows us to get out of our own way, and find freedom and peace in the letting go.

At this particular time, it seems appropriate that we visit a piece of scripture that is given as an alternate reading for this Sunday, the 12th of September 2021. It is exactly twenty years and a day since the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York.

I’m going to visit a couple of other scriptures with which you will be familiar, as well as other writings appropriate to the thinking of this time.

The first piece of scripture, which was an alternative reading for today, actually in lieu of today’s Psalm, although I think the Psalm was too important to leave out.

Here is the scripture from the Wisdom of Solomon (7:26-8:1)

**Wisdom of Solomon 7:26- 8:1**

**For she is a reflection of eternal light,
a spotless mirror of the working of God,
and an image of his goodness.
Although she is but one, she can do all things,
and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;
in every generation she passes into holy souls
and makes them friends of God, and prophets;
for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.
She is more beautiful than the sun,
and excels every constellation of the stars.
Compared with the light she is found to be superior,
for it is succeeded by the night,
but against wisdom evil does not prevail.**

**She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other,
and she orders all things well.**

The passage speaks of Wisdom as the reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working God.

As we emerge from 20 years of living with the reality of 9/11, we must ask ourselves how much wiser as we than we were before that date. How much more might humankind be thought of as a “spotless mirror of the working God?” It’s a difficult question to answer quickly and will need much thought. And before we can even begin to think about how spotless our reflection of God might be, we must think about the expression “working God.” God is never still, never resting on God’s laurels, except to step back and see that all is good.

In God’s eyes, all is potentially good, all that is broken can be mended, all that is mistaken can be made wise enough to not make the same mistakes again. I say “can” not “will.” Only each one of us can decide whether we are courageous enough or wise enough to be able to step away from our past mistakes, our regrets, our smudged images in our mirror of God, in order to see through the glass clearly in a renewed future.

It is ours to discern the relationship between dark and light in our lives….the relationship between wisdom and evil. In the reflection of eternal light which is God’s light, a light that transcends any other light, or lightness of being. God passes that eternal light “into holy souls and makes them friends of God.”

We just have to be open to receive the light so that we can be conduits, if you will, for this superior light. As it says in our prayer book in the Song of Simeon at Evening Prayer:

**The Song of Simeon    Nunc DimittisLuke 2:29-32

Lord, you now have set your servant free \*
    to go in peace as you have promised;
For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, \*
    whom you have prepared for all the world to see:
A Light to enlighten the nations, \*
    and the glory of your people Israel.**

A light to enlighten the nations.

Next time you look at yourself in a mirror, What do you see reflected there? What did you expect to see? What would it be like to see yourself reflected in the light of Wisdom’s reflection. If you could see yourself through her, how would your reflection be altered, your image shift, your understanding of yourself change?

Wisdom holds all the transcendent powers of God, the one Creator. She makes all things new and within each new era, each new emerging generation, she enters into holy souls and creates friends of God. She holds the key to transformation for each one of us and for the universe, and we ponder the last words from the piece of scripture we heard today: “With force she stretches from one end of the earth to the other and rules the whole universe gently (8:1)

So, in the light of God’s divine Wisdom, we are left to sift through out human thoughts. The trouble with us humans is that we always move toward human thoughts and never think in terms of reflecting the light of God, because, well, we’re not Divine in the sense that God is divine. Sure, we are made in the image of God and yes, we are walking miracles, so in one sense, we have all the necessary ingredients to become far more divine than our images reflect. We have to earn our wings with the acquisition of Wisdom, learned through time and circumstances, often of our own making.

God had to take on our humanity, had to come among us to try to help us understand how to transcend into a more divine plain. But God the omnipotent, God the Creator also recognized the definitive gap between our humanity and our divinity. St. James captures that gap my mentioning our use of the tongue…another God given gift for tasting delicious food and for speaking as we feel compelled to express ourselves.

Perhaps what is missing is, what we could call, the appreciation gap.

Peter, iin all innocence, when asked by Jesus who Peter thought Jesus was, said, “You are the Messiah.” Right answer, and from the Greek translation, one could say, wrong timing. Oh Peter, that you could be wiser and more discreet. “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” Jesus had distinctly told his disciples, including Peter, not to tell anyone about him.

So we come full circle from the mistakes of our own human making to who it is we find reflected in the “spotless mirror of the working God.”

We will each have to formulate in our minds how we are reflected as we think back to September 11th, 2002 and how we view the event today, but as we do let us heed some words which we would do well to hear again, even though we know them well, as they have echoed for humankind down through the centuries and will continue to sound out in the centuries to come:

## 1 Corinthians 13

## *The Gift of Love*

**13If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.**

**4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

**8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 11When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.**

**Lamentations 3: 2-24**

***Faith and Hope***

**22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
   his mercies never come to an end;
23 they are new every morning;
   great is your faithfulness.
24 ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul,
   ‘therefore I will hope in him.’**

## Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

## *Everything Has Its Time*

**3For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
2 a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
3 a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
5 a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
6 a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
7 a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
8 a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.**

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| ***Frederick Buechner******Peace*** |

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| **PEACE HAS COME TO MEAN THE TIME when there aren't any wars or even when there aren't any major wars. Beggars can't be choosers; we'd most of us settle for that. But in Hebrew peace, shalom, means fullness, means having everything you need to be wholly and happily yourself.****One of the titles by which Jesus is known is Prince of Peace, and he used the word himself in what seem at first glance to be two radically contradictory utterances. On one occasion he said to the disciples, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). And later on, the last time they ate together, he said to them, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" (John 14:27).****The contradiction is resolved when you realize that, for Jesus, peace seems to have meant not the absence of struggle, but the presence of love.****-Originally published in** [**Wishful Thinking**](https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=46167869&msgid=442067&act=GPPJ&c=1318316&destination=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.frederickbuechner.com%2Fwishful-thinking-a-seekers-abc%2F&cf=8078&v=35cc99d68791af93eac771c609082aefb6e8ca98e68ed62759c0cf7e21576db3) **and later in** [**Beyond Words**](https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=46167869&msgid=442067&act=GPPJ&c=1318316&destination=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.frederickbuechner.com%2Fbeyond-words-daily-readings-in-the-abcs-of-faith%2F&cf=8078&v=c277651e98f4e86ff28bcdc59241a8f7207a748b566d6289fa47d5ed5f05f4b3) |

Amen

Written to the Glory of God

E. J. R. Culver+

September 12, 2021v