

“Make My Joy Complete”

Psalm: Psalm 25:1-9 (read antiphonally)

Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love. (Ps. 25:6)

¹To | you, O Lord, I lift | up my soul.

²My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be | put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph | over me.

³Let none who look to you be | put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame | who are treacherous.

⁴Show me your | ways, O Lord, and teach | me your paths. R

⁵Lead me in your | truth and teach me, for you are the God of my
salvation; in you have I trusted all | the day long.

⁶Remember, O Lord, your compas- | sion and love,
for they are from | everlasting.

⁷Remember not the sins of my youth and | my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your
good- | ness, O Lord.

⁸You are gracious and up- | right, O Lord;
therefore you teach sinners | in your way.

⁹You lead the low- | ly in justice and teach the low- | ly your way. R

Reading: Philippians 2:1-13 (Sue)

As part of a call for harmony rather than self-seeking, Paul uses a very early Christian hymn that extols the selflessness of Christ in his obedient death on the cross. Christ's selfless perspective is to be the essential perspective we share as the foundation for Christian accord.

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Gospel for Today **Matthew 21:23-32**

After driving the moneychangers out of the temple (21:12), Jesus begins teaching there. His authority is questioned by the religious leaders, who are supposed to be in charge of the temple.

²³When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.” ²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”

Texts continue to confound...Last week, we had the story of the workers in the vineyard, with the ones who worked only an hour at the end of the day receiving the same wage as those who worked all day – seemingly unfair from the perspectives of the workers who worked all day, and felt they should receive more, but seen as generous to the latecomers. In the kingdom of God, all things are possible...indeed in the matter of wages, in the kingdom of God, the workers are paid fairly, rather than the landowners raking up the millions in profits...in the kingdom of God, the idea of a guaranteed annual income does not seem so outrageous...in the kingdom of God, there is always room at the table for one more.

In today's Gospel, more riddles – “Where do you get your authority?”, the Pharisees challenge Jesus. His as usual enigmatic reply - Answer me first – did the baptism of John come from heaven or earth...

Conundrum...if we say this...and if we say that... we don't know – well, shrugs Jesus, if you can't figure it out for yourself, then who are you to challenge my authority? And

- a man had two sons,...which did the will of his father? Still a conundrum, because as Jesus saying in the end, it is the actions that matter...and if so, what about faith or belief – is the good action of a

faithless person worth more than the inaction of a person of great faith? Perhaps... Or perhaps Jesus is saying – you can play all the mind games and word games you like, but at the end of the day you will still not understand the fullness and complexity of God...God is not to be defined, or controlled, or limited...God is God and we are not...

How do we live our lives... that is the greater question.

As St. Paul writes to the Philippians:

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

...make my joy complete....make my day...this is how you live out the

Christ-like life....

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

Verbal sparring and mental gymnastics are well and good in their time and place perhaps, but God sees into the heart...sees into how we are with one

another, how we are with ourselves...remember, we are in the Gospel of Matthew this year, the Gospel which ends with Jesus giving divine welcome to those who fed him and clothed him and cared for him and visited him, and divine judgement on those who failed to do so.

⁴Show me your | ways, O Lord, and teach | me your paths. R

⁵Lead me in your | truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all | the day long.

⁶Remember, O Lord, your compas- | sion and love, for they are from | everlasting.

Make my joy complete....

Dare to dream, dare to dream that there could be a world where all would feel truly welcome, all would be truly loved, rules and regulations overturned for measures of generosity and mercy...where your actions of goodness matter...

Make my joy complete....think about it for a moment....what would make YOUR joy complete on this day....? What would make someone else's joy complete...? Think on these things, then dare to dream and dare to act, so that one day they will be realized.

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May your joy be complete, this day and all days. Amen.