Sunday, August 10, 2025

Sherri Matthew, Officiant

St. Thomas & Grace

Morning Prayer

Sermon

Have you ever prayed for the impossible? And had your prayer answered? In the way you expected or in a novel, creative way you hadn’t imagined?

I experienced this. A short story from my own life. Earning a music degree that was impossible due to numerous obstructions at SUNY Fredonia. 16 years after withdrawing from Fredonia, I finished my education at Green Mountain College and became a church harpist… which I hadn’t planned on! My intention in 1987 was to pursue classical piano and music theory/composition… essential a secular career.

However, God had other plans and my music studies at my second institution where I finished my degree focused on sacred music: organ, Gregorian chant, and the many different kinds of harps. I found myself drawn to applying the traditionally secular and decidedly entertainment-oriented Irish wire-strung harp to a liturgical context and have done so, ever since, creating and building a new type of harp service music intended for worship. This music is indeed, “in service to God’s people”.

So often, what do we experience in this life?

Frustration, Impatience, Previous disappointments

God’s time scale is different from ours. Our expectations for a proposed solution are often quite different from what God has in mind.

Be open to waiting a while, even quite a long while, listening for unusual or seemingly impossible solutions to problems, while offering to others healing, justice, love, grace, and continually being alert to injustice in the community. Faith is the continued belief and acceptance of Christ’s message.

Today’s readings in Genesis 15:1-6, the Lord speaks to Abram and tells him that “your reward shall be very great” and invites him to count the stars in the sky, comparing their numbers “so shall your descendants be.” The Lord is essentially foretelling the future Jewish people. Both Abram and Sarai are of course, beyond the normal age of childbearing.

Sarai, with God’s help, becomes the matriarch of the Jewish Diaspora. Having a child at her age seems impossible. Both Sarai’s becoming a mother and establishing a new people, a new nation, are part of God’s creative, unexpected plans.

You will be taken care of by God.

In today’s readings, Hebrews 11: 1-3 and 8-16, we are told that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” and, “All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them.”

The text in 11-13 notes that they were “foreigners and strangers on earth”; in other words, as Diaspora Jews they were living in cities where they were not originally from and were regarded as outsiders. This was the situation for Abram and Sarai.

The author of Hebrews sees the heavenly future as the city of the new Jerusalem, a place where the Jewish people can establish their identity and feel safe.

Where we are now is not God’s promised future for us. We’re each of us on a journey, one that is not complete in this earthly realm. In this, we may enjoy refreshing stopovers on the way as we grow and eventually reach our final destination.

What have you left behind? What new land, new space, place, identity, situation, what have you moved onto in the hopes of something better in life?

It may not be completely what you’re hoping to achieve (yet), but it may well be in alignment with God’s plans for you, a step on the ladder. Imperfect now but a change towards a vastly new direction, with implications for positive effects on others in your orbit.

It’s also possible that some things we pray for won’t happen within our lifetime, although God will see to it that our prayers are answered to the benefit of succeeding generations. People who start a new life in a new country may find their own upward mobility limited, but that of their children and grandchildren may be more successful.

In the same way, this world is not our true home but a temporary residing place, as we grow spiritually and know with joy that our future home will be with God, and free of the earthly cares, frustrations, and limitations we encounter in this worldly space.

Abram and his people knew this. They were a nomadic people and looked forward to having a land to call truly theirs. Sarai and Abram accepted God’s call, His invitation to the seemingly impossible and participated in a life-changing, life-giving path that enriched not only their lives but those of the people around them and the many generations that followed. Even if His proposal seemed truly outrageous at first (remember how Sarai laughed!), they still accepted the great responsibility that was placed upon them and the changes that it wrought in their lives, as well as the expectations they may have had for their later years.

I found my relationship to music changed after I allowed God to take over. I identify as a church musician, specifically as a liturgical harpist. This is the result of the inner spiritual change, that manifests when God’s ways become our ways and those of the world, are no longer as important as they once seemed.

God takes care of His people.

God serves His people. In today’s Gospel reading, Luke 12:32-40, Jesus illustrates to His disciples a popular Roman holiday custom: that of inverting the traditional master/slave relationship for a day. But His metaphor means to describe how God will serve and take care of His people *always*, not just for one day only.

We are called to be ready, as followers of Jesus, for the surprises and the solutions, the gifts and the answers, that our Lord has prepared for us, to some of life’s most vexing problems.

And yes, for He Himself, and His very returned presence among us, now and when we least expect the hope and the help of His guiding Hand. As Jesus clearly says to His disciples, “You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Jesus’ metaphor of the homeowner and the thief who breaks in, suggests the non-believing human heart who is not yet ready to welcome Christ Jesus’ lifesaving message, and who would actively resist Him if he knew Christ was on the way.

God took care of Abram and Sarai. He guided them through the challenging changes in their lives, as they accepted His enormous gift, both to themselves and to their descendants. They were truly blessed, in an amazing, unexpected way.

In the Navy they have a saying: “The difficult we do immediately. The impossible takes a little longer.” God’s version: “The impossible I can take care of. I’m just asking for your faith.”

Order of Morning Prayer

Jubilate BCP p. 82

The Third Song of Isaiah (Surge, illuminare) BCP p. 87

Suffrages A BCP p.97

Hymns

Introit 686 – Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Gradual 432 – O Praise Ye the Lord!

Postlude 390 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty