

Hear what the Spirit is saying

In Scripture and Prayer and
The Great Cloud of Witnesses

Week of February 13, 2022

Collect for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness we can do nothing good without you, give us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. –BCP 216

Jeremiah 17:5-10 NRSV

⁵ Thus says the Lord: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. ⁶ They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

⁷ Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. ⁸ They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. ⁹ The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse— who can understand it? ¹⁰ I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.

1 Corinthians 15:12-20 NRSV

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

Luke 6:17-26 NRSV

¹⁷ Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸ They had come to hear him and to be

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healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

²⁰ Then he looked up at his disciples and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. ²² “Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

²⁵ “Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. “Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶ “Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

Psalm 1 BCP 585

- 1 Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
* nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!
- 2 Their delight is in the law of the Lord, * and they meditate on his law day and night.
- 3 They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; * everything they do shall prosper.
- 4 It is not so with the wicked; * they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes, * nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.
- 6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, * but the way of the wicked is doomed.



(Re)Introducing A Spiritual Day Hike

In our Spiritual Day Hike we'll walk among and walk with "Holy Women" and "Holy Men," who constitute a "Great Cloud of Witnesses." As 'hikers' we'll use "The Great Commandment" as a guide. Without leaving the building we'll travel far and wide. We'll ask: "How did this person love God with all their heart, soul, and mind?" Likewise, "How did this person love their neighbor as they loved themselves?" More importantly we'll ask, "What does his/her witness teach us about the love of God and neighbor?" We'll depend on the Spirit to extend our questions into realms we can barely imagine at the moment. We'll depend on the Spirit to call forth our growth in holiness, in wisdom, and in action. Each week I'll select at least two "saints" to walk with. Also, I encourage you to explore with "trail mates" from the Great Cloud of Witnesses. You can find the calendar of saints to explore with here: <https://bit.ly/Learn104>. The short biographies, Collects, and suggested readings can be found on Holy Women, Holy Men web pages here: <https://bit.ly/Learn151>. Google a name or visit Wikipedia for even more information.

This Week's Holy Women and Men (Witnesses to inspire us)

[February 14](#) Cyril, *Monk* and Methodius, *Bishop Missionaries to the Slavs*, 869, 885

[February 15](#) Thomas Bray, Priest and Missionary, 1730

[February 16](#) Charles Todd Quintard, Bishop of Tennessee, 1898

[February 17](#) Janani Luwum, Archbishop of Uganda, and Martyr, 1977

[February 18](#) Martin Luther, Theologian, 1546

February 13 Absalom Jones, Priest, 1818

Absalom Jones was born a house slave in 1746 in Delaware. He taught himself to read out of the New Testament, among other books. When sixteen, he was sold to a store owner in Philadelphia. There he attended a night school for Blacks, operated by Quakers. At twenty, he married another slave, and purchased her freedom with his earnings. Jones bought his own freedom in 1784. At St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church, he served as lay minister for its Black membership. The active evangelism of Jones and that of his friend, Richard Allen, greatly increased Black membership at St. George's. The alarmed vestry decided to segregate Blacks into an upstairs gallery, without notifying them. During a Sunday service when ushers attempted to remove them, the Blacks indignantly walked out in a body.

In 1787, Black Christians organized the Free African Society, the first organized Afro-American society, and Absalom Jones and Richard Allen

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were elected overseers. Members of the Society paid monthly dues for the benefit of those in need. The Society established communication with similar Black groups in other cities. In 1792, the Society began to build a church, which was dedicated on July 17, 1794.

The African Church applied for membership in the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania on the following conditions: 1, that they be received as an organized body; 2, that they have control over their local affairs; 3, that Absalom Jones be licensed as layreader, and, if qualified, be ordained as minister. In October 1794 it was admitted as St. Thomas African Episcopal Church. Bishop White ordained Jones as deacon in 1795 and as priest on September 21, 1802.

Jones was an earnest preacher. He denounced slavery, and warned the oppressors to “clean their hands of slaves.” To him, God was the Father, who always acted on “behalf of the oppressed and distressed.” But it was his constant visiting and mild manner that made him beloved by his own flock and by the community. St. Thomas Church grew to over 500 members during its first year. Known as “the Black Bishop of the Episcopal Church,” Jones was an example of persistent faith in God and in the Church as God’s instrument.

Collect

Set us free, heavenly Father, from every bond of prejudice and fear; that, honoring the steadfast courage of your servant Absalom Jones, we may show forth in our lives the reconciling love and true freedom of the children of God, which you have given us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Lessons at the Eucharist

[Isaiah 11:1-5](#) | [Psalm 137:1-6](#) | [Galatians 5:1-5](#) | [John 15:12-15](#)

Supplemental Resources

Immortality and Resurrection

IMMORTAL MEANS DEATH-PROOF. To believe in the immortality of the soul is to believe that though John Brown’s body lies a-smoldering in the grave, his soul goes marching on simply because marching on is the nature of souls just the way producing butterflies is the nature of caterpillars. Bodies die, but souls don’t.

True or false, this is not the biblical view, although many who ought to know better assume it is. The biblical view differs in several significant ways:

1. As someone has put it, the biblical understanding of human beings is not that they have bodies, but that they are bodies. God made Adam by slapping some mud together to make a body and then breathing some breath into it to make a living soul. Thus the body and soul that make up human beings are as inextricably part and parcel of each other as the leaves and flames that make up a bonfire. When you kick the bucket, you kick it 100 percent. All of you. There is nothing left to go marching on with.
2. The idea that the body dies and the soul doesn't is an idea that implies that the body is something rather gross and embarrassing, like a case of hemorrhoids. The Greeks spoke of it as the prison house of the soul. The suggestion was that to escape it altogether was something less than a disaster.

The Bible, on the other hand, sees the body in particular and the material world in general as a good and glorious invention. How could it be otherwise when it was invented by a good and glorious God?

The Old Testament rings loud with the praise of trees and birds and rain and mountains, of wine that gladdens our hearts and oil that makes our faces shine and bread that strengthens us. Read Psalm 104, for instance. Or try the Song of Solomon for as abandoned and unabashed a celebration of the physical as you're apt to find anywhere.

As for the New Testament, Jesus himself, far from being a world-denying ascetic, was accused of being a wino and a chowhound (Matthew 11:19). When he heard that his friend Lazarus was dead, he didn't mouth any pious clichés about what a merciful release it was. He wept.

The whole idea of incarnation, of the word becoming flesh, affirms the physical and fleshly in yet another way, by declaring that it was a uniform even God wasn't ashamed to wear.

Saint Paul undoubtedly had his hang-ups, but when he compares flesh unfavorably to spirit, he is not talking about body versus soul, but about the old person without Christ versus the new person with him.

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3. Those who believe in the immortality of the soul believe that life after death is as natural a human function as waking after sleep. The Bible, instead, speaks of resurrection. It is entirely unnatural. We do not go on living beyond the grave because that's how we are made. Rather, we go to our graves as dead as a doornail and are given our lives back again by God (i.e., resurrected), just as we were given them by God in the first place, because that is the way God is made.

4. All the major Christian creeds affirm belief in resurrection of the body. In other words, they affirm the belief that what God in spite of everything prizes enough to bring back to life is not just some disembodied echo of human beings but a new and revised version of all the things that made them the particular human beings they were and that they need something like a body to express: their personality, the way they looked, the sound of their voices, their peculiar capacity for creating and loving, in some sense their faces.

5. The idea of the immortality of the soul is based on the experience of humanity's indomitable spirit. The idea of the resurrection of the body is based on the experience of God's unspeakable love.

Buechner, Frederick. *Beyond Words: Daily Readings in the ABC's of Faith*, HarperCollins. [Kindle Edition](#).