

**Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost  
November 14,2021**

**“Story time”**

This is my Grandmother’s Bible. Every night just before bedtime my brother and I would gather with her and listen to her “stories” on Old Time Radio”. Then she would take this book in her hands and begin to read. Before long she’d close the Book and recite a story from heart. She’d bring the story to life, her eyes sparkling with delight as they danced into my soul. As a Dad I did likewise for my children. We had a treasure trove of Books to read from. And then I’d light a candle we’d say our prayers and the boys would invariably fall to sleep in peace. Nowadays I carry my Bible, Prayer Book and Hymnal and a hundred other books with me electronically.

This is the Sunday of the Holy Bible. Scripture Sunday. Today we mark this sacred book as the Book of Books. Every day of my life I read, mark, learn and inwardly digest what those writings say. You and I regard the Scripture with a special reverence. Every Sunday we read from the Hebrew Scripture, the Psalms, The Epistles and a Deacon or a Priest stands and brings the Gospel Book front and center and proclaims the words of Jesus because he is the Word of God Made Flesh and Blood.

During my time with you previously I recounted how I became reacquainted with an old college chum and how both of us were surprised to discover how our lives evolved. Stephen is now a semi-retired rabbi in Long Boat Key, Florida and you know what has become of me. We were both delighted to see that as our paths diverged they then crossed in a profoundly spiritual way. For both of us the Sacred Scrolls of Scripture hold special significance.

Stephen told me the story of how his congregation came into the stewardship of an especially sacred set of scrolls. The story begins in September 1938 with the Munich Agreement, when Britain and France agreed to Hitler's demand to be given the German speaking border regions of Czechoslovakia. Jews from approximately sixty congregations immediately fled the region (known as the Sudetenland). In almost every case, the ritual treasures of these synagogues were destroyed or lost.

When the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia in 1940, all Jewish congregations were closed. After the Nazis occupied Czechoslovakia, Jewish communities were instructed to send the contents of their synagogues to the Jewish Museum in Prague. The Sacred Torah scrolls were shipped and catalogued by faithful Jews. . Then they were deported to the Terezin concentration camp. The Prague Jewish Museum managed to preserve and protect the precious items of Judaica throughout the war and the holocaust.

The Memorial Scrolls Trust (MST) was established to carry out the sacred task of distributing them. Two of these scrolls are now in the hands of Temple Beth Israel in Long Boat Key. I remember the day Rabbi Sniderman showed them to me with a blend of pride and tears.

In unsettling times like the ones we live in I am resolved to cleave to the Scripture with all my heart and soul, with all my mind and strength and I think it wise to remember the story they tell us.

Class, you remember the Law, the first Five Books of Moses. The Story of Creation, the Call of Abraham, the time of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. You know the story of Moses bringing the Children of Israel from Slavery in Egypt to Freedom in the Promised Land. But just as important was the delivery of the Law of God for the People to live by. For the people of God The Law is at the heart of our shared identity. With Freedom comes Responsibility.

Then there are the Major Prophets; Isaiah and Jeremiah and the twelve minor prophets. Besides that there are the Writings such as the Wisdom literature; the Wisdom of Solomon, the Proverbs and so on. There are the Histories; Chronicles & Kings, and embedded within all of Scripture there is a magnificent narrative and wonderful sets of stories.

And lest we forget the Psalms the most beautiful anthology of devotional poetry I know. As an observant Jew Jesus would have read the Psalter religiously. We refer to the Psalter as the Prayer Book of Jesus and by reciting it together we all speak the words and the heart of Jesus in our hearts and upon our lips.

All of the Law and the Prophets is but prelude to our encounter with Jesus, the Word made Flesh.

One of the high points of my life was the day Cindy and I went to Trinity College in Dublin to see the Book of Kells. It was opened to the prologue of John's Gospel. A gathering of nuns was nearby and I began read aloud the words of the sacred text

In principio erat Verbum,  
et Verbum erat apud Deum,  
et Deus erat Verbum.

In the beginning was the Word  
And the Word was with God  
And the Word was God.

I was reading the words faithfully written by monks more than a thousand years ago. Ancestors of my own blood.

The Book of Kells is recognized universally as among the highest achievements of Western Art during the so called "Dark Ages". While the rest of Europe was mired in chaos the Celtic World was focused on preserving Scripture and Prayer and they were thriving. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest. But above all they copied the Scriptures faithfully by hand and illuminated them with art and script that lasted a thousand years.

The Book of Kells and the Lindisfarne Gospels contain Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They present four faithful snapshots of who Jesus was and is to us.

By the way the Celts were known as the Publishing Society of the 6th and 7th centuries and beyond. They preserved not only the sacred writings of the church but the classics of entire Graeco-Roman world. For our ancestors in faith the written word was sacred by whomever it was written.

Class, let's review now. The Gospels are as I have said are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Acts of the Apostles go with Luke because they were written as a unit. Then there are the Epistles of Paul, Timothy, John, James the brother of our Lord and the Book of Hebrews which we have been reading recently in church. Finally there is the Book of Revelation which stands alone in scripture at a time when the first persecutions put us to the test. It was as if the world were coming to an end and therefore the folks who endured those traumatic times couched their experience in Apocalyptic language and conceptual framework.

Which brings me back to my friend Rabbi Sniderman. I asked him if he saw any parallels in our history to the 1930's. And he replied with one word; "Everywhere!"

As you can imagine the rise in hate crimes against Jews is on the rise, alarmingly so. He has to have security to protect the synagogue against attack and just gathering to worship God is seen by many as risky.

We live in Apocalyptic times or so it sometimes seems.

In ancient times Rome faced one catastrophe after another. Political usurpation, plagues, water shortages, refugee and migration pressures and one violent uprising after another.

At that time when faced with the disintegration of civil society, the Desert Abbas and Ammas (Fathers and Mothers) fled to the desert where they devoted their lives to prayer and to the study of scripture. Curiously the more they sought refuge and isolation the more famous they became. Antony of Egypt spent his entire life as a “hermit” and yet scores and scores of devoted and faithful people went to him for solace and guidance.

The well traveled Celts also took much to heart from Antony and others. But they added to the idea of being apart from the social order. They added the example of Jesus who walked everywhere he could to meet the needs of the people he met.

The Celts followed his example. When they found the sick and the dying they ministered to them. When they were hungry and poor they fed them and shared whatever they had. When weary travelers came by they gave them safe lodging for as long as it was needed. And as for scholarship they were among the best in Europe and literacy among them was essential to their worship of God. Then they took the bill and gave it to the rich to pay.

As for the worship of God, this they did 7 times a day. At the appointed hour they stopped whatever they were doing to pray, to read the Psalter and the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

And so Empires come and Empires go. Whatever becomes of us in this uncertain time one thing is certain to me. I will love God and I will love God’s people. I will pray and read the Psalms of David and the Gospels of Jesus.

Good people of faith the world over will do likewise. And the Rabbi and I will faithfully read, mark, learn and inwardly digest these holy words for as long as we have breath.

In the Name of God, the Most Holy Undivided and Everlasting Trinity.  
Amen.

Fr Paul

The Lections for Scripture Sunday follow, along with highlighted portions marking my meditations on those Scriptures.

### **The Collect:**

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **First Lesson: Daniel 12:1-3**

1' At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. 2Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

### **Psalm 16**

- 1 Protect me, O God, for I take refuge in you; \*  
I have said to the Lord, "You are my Lord,  
my good above all other."
- 2 All my delight is upon the godly that are in the land, \*  
upon those who are noble among the people.
- 3 But those who run after other gods \*  
shall have their troubles multiplied.
- 4 Their libations of blood I will not offer, \*  
nor take the names of their gods upon my lips.

5 O Lord, you are my portion and my cup; \*  
it is you who uphold my lot.  
6 My boundaries enclose a pleasant land; \*  
indeed, I have a goodly heritage.  
7 I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel; \*  
my heart teaches me, night after night.  
8 I have set the Lord always before me; \*  
because he is at my right hand I shall not fall.  
9 My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; \*  
my body also shall rest in hope.  
10 For you will not abandon me to the grave, \*  
nor let your holy one see the Pit.  
11 You will show me the path of life; \*  
in your presence there is fullness of joy,  
and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

**Epistle: Hebrews 10:11-14 (15-18) 19-25**

11 And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. 12But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, 'he sat down at the right hand of God', 13and since then has been waiting 'until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.' 14For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. [15And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, 16' This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds', 17he also adds, 'I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.' 18Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.] 19 Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, 20by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), 21and since

we have a great priest over the house of God, 22let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. 24And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, 25not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

### **Gospel: Mark 13:1-8**

1 As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!' 2Then Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'

3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, 4'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?' 5Then Jesus began to say to them, 'Beware that no one leads you astray. 6Many will come in my name and say, "I am he!"\* and they will lead many astray. 7When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. 8For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.



