

**Sermon :: 16-Nov-2026**  
**Proper 28, Year C**

“ Do not be weary in doing what is right ”

In truth, the few images still in my memory are too ‘misty’ for me to be *absolutely* sure ... but I *think* it was the first professional baseball game I ever attended: My best friend’s parents were taking John and me to a Philadelphia Phillies game. Now, it must have been 1975 or ’76, for Phil and Phillis [*sic*], the Phillies’ bicentennial-era mascots ... two Campbell’s Soup-chubby-cheeked kids, dressed head-to-toe in colonial garb ... figure prominently in my memories of that night.<sup>1</sup>

But my memories of *earlier* that day are prominent, too. I didn’t receive an allowance, and my father realized that I might want a little pocket money ... at the venerable Vet (as the Phillies’<sup>2</sup> then-home was known) ... to buy a souvenir. So, he offered me a deal: for every bucket of stones I gathered up out of the new vegetable patch he’d dug in our backyard ... I’d get a *quarter*. At first, this seemed like a gold mine: How hard could it be to pile some stones in a garden pail and walk them to the wooded area at the yard’s edge? Well, as it turns out, *very* hard, for an eight-year-old me! Those stones didn’t magically *surface* in the garden ... or put *themselves* into the bucket ... and so, I spent *hours* digging, dragging and dumping. I have *no* recollection of what, with the few dollars I’d earned, I may have purchased at the game that *night* ... but how clearly and vividly do I remember the larger lesson of that *day*: Do the **WORK** ... so you can *enjoy* the **REWARD**.

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*Today*, as we come to the end of this year’s cycle of Sunday lessons (for next Sunday, Christ the King, has its own special readings) ... we receive, in some ways, our ‘REWARD.’<sup>3</sup> The prophet Isaiah—or, more accurately, someone writing, later, in Isaiah’s name and style<sup>4</sup>—relays the words of God’s promise to create “new heavens and a new earth” ... “Jerusalem as a joy and its people a delight.” The people ... once wandering in exile ... will, now, “build houses and *inhabit* them ... plant vineyards and *eat* their fruit”; their children will, at last, be “offspring blessed by the LORD—and their descendants as well.” For a people ... a People of *God* ... who have so long known punishment and privation, as predicted by the prophets ... this is, indeed, music to the ears and joy to the soul: the emergence of *heaven*, upon *earth*.

And no *less* so, for *us*. For such is the world that Jesus not only *came* to create ... but also *created*. A Kingdom—*His* Kingdom—that He not only *foretold* ... but also *founded*. We are a people ... a humanity ... a world ... that dwelt in *exile* from God, until Jesus’ appearance. And now that He has lived, died and risen again ... *we, too*, live in “a *new earth*”—a *new order*; a *new love*, a *new covenant*:

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<sup>1</sup> If you want to read a brief account of what passed for high-tech special effects at sporting events in the mid-70s, read [this](#)! The duo gave way to the Phanatic in 1979.

<sup>2</sup> They shared it with the Eagles ... and *also* every big-name concert act that came to town.

<sup>3</sup> Thankfully, we are following the cycle of lessons that gives us Isaiah today. In the other cycle, we would have heard:

See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. *Malachi 4:1-2*

<sup>4</sup> Modern biblical scholars think that the second part (or, less likely, the second and third parts) of the Book of Isaiah was written a good deal of time after the actual prophet Isaiah lived ... at a time when those who’d been exiled to Babylon have now returned to the land of Israel.

We *are* the “offspring blessed by the LORD” ... for we have already *received* ... and we *enjoy* ... the **REWARD** of God, in Christ and the Holy Spirit.

But ... *but* ... how we struggle to *see* the REWARD: to grasp it ... to *know* it and give *thanks* for it. We feel *distant* from God ... when we *should* feel *near*. We see a world full of *chaos* ... when we *should* be in *paradise*. The wolves prey upon the lambs as much, if not more, than they ever did ... and the lions scorn the straw the lowly farmer offers them: far preferring the flesh of his *body* to the produce of his *hands*. **This**, we wonder, is what it’s like to live in the REWARD of **God?!**

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This *conundrum* ... this *disconnect*—*dissonance* ... is what got me thinking about my dad and all those endless buckets filled with stones. For in order to *enjoy* the REWARD, we must *do* the **WORK**: In order to see and appreciate the “new earth” of Christ that we, in fact, dwell in ... we must overcome the distractions and falsehoods that seek to deceive us. In order to know how it is to live as the people of God’s “delight” ... we must first grasp that we *are* **God’s** people, and not our *own*. And in order to know the blessedness of the Lord that surrounds and sustains us ... we must share it—communicate it, *open* it—to others.

- In “all” Scripture ... more particularly in the New Testament ... and most exquisitely in the four *Gospels* ... we have the revelation of God, in Christ, quite literally, at our fingertips—right before our very eyes. While there is more that we *can* ... and perhaps *should* ... know, think and say about God than is contained in the Bible’s pages ... still, everything we *need* to know for salvation—for our *own* REWARD *and* the REWARD God offers all *others*—is contained in Scripture.<sup>5</sup>
  - > Therefore, we are called (as we prayed for the grace to do, in our collect for today) ... to *do* the **WORK** of “hear[ing] ... read[ing], mark[ing], learn[ing] and inwardly digest[ing] Scripture, [ | ] so] that we may embrace and ... hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life.”
  - >> We’ve *received* the REWARD: What is *our* commitment to doing the **WORK** of studying Scripture?
- The Church, *too*, is a gift of God by which we can know, experience, lift up and advance the Kingdom of Christ that is *this* world: in our liturgy and prayers ... in our community and caring for one another ... in our dignifying, serving and truly loving our neighbors—and, indeed, *all* living creatures.
  - > Therefore, St Paul<sup>6</sup> calls us to *do* the **WORK** of the Church: not only supporting it financially ... but also contributing time and talent; effort and thoughtfulness ... to its ministries and missions. The Church is the Body of Christ and each of us—*each* of us—**as** members *of* it ... **has** a vital role to play in the Church’s **WORK** of being Christ’s hands and feet—**making real** the REWARD of His ongoing *presence*—for the world: whether in the parish office ... at St Mark’s, City Heights ... at the Christmas Marketplace ... or down at Showers of Blessings.
  - >> We’ve *received* the REWARD: What is *our* commitment to doing the **WORK** of Christ’s

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<sup>5</sup> Article VI of the “Articles of Religion” (1571 (CoE); 1801 (TEC)), *BCP*, p 868. Indeed, the collect for today, quoted below in my text, was a product of the very *first Book of Common Prayer* (1549) and its great (and very Reformation-inspired) emphasis on the laity’s regular study of, and instruction in, Scripture.

<sup>6</sup> Or someone writing in his name (scholars are fairly divided).

## Church?

- And finally, Jesus *Himself* calls us to the WORK of proclaiming the REWARD of God that is on-offer to the entire world. In today's Gospel lesson, speaking in an apocalyptic vein, He foretells of the faithful being arrested and persecuted for His sake. While we don't face *those* sanctions ... so many of our critics ... *both* left *and* right; *both* Christian *and* secular ... perceive us Episcopalians as *flirting* with ... if not even *crossing* ... the margins of what *they* say is theologically, morally and intellectually defensible. In the wider Christian 'culture' of *our* day ... we mainline, peaceable, humble, *God*-loving, *neighbor*-loving, open-minded, always-exploring, all-inclusive and (as much as we can) Jesus-imitating Christians can feel rather sidelined, can't we? For let's face it: This "Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement," as former Presiding Bishop Curry used to call us, just isn't all that large or influential.  
> And yet ... it is *from* the margins ... *out* of our littleness ... *because* of our overlooked-ness ... that we can *do* the radical, transformational, love-affirming, hope-giving WORK ... of acquainting others with *their* Godly REWARD, *too*; of "testifying" to the goodness and rightness and blessedness of this world ... to those who are angry or anxious, hopeless or heedless.  
>>> So, let's roll up our sleeves and *do* the WORK of telling others about the REWARD of *God*, in Jesus, that *we* see and have, in faith ... and inviting *them* to ponder ... consider ... explore *it*, a little, too ... *with* us: *Share*, with family members, co-workers, friends, social media correspondents ... why *we* come to church ... what *we* experience here: what *hope* we gain, what *grace* we know, what *love* we share, what *peace* we're filled with. And assure them *they* can, *too*!<sup>7</sup>  
> We've *received* the REWARD: What is *our* commitment to doing the WORK of sharing Christ with others?

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When I was eight years-old, my father hired me, I **had** long thought, to do some garden WORK ... so I'd be able to enjoy (more fully) the REWARD of a night at the ballpark.

But somewhere along the journey of this sermon, I grasped a different way of seeing this: My dad had dug and prepared ... all by himself ... a patch, in our backyard, for a vegetable garden: a garden that would keep us in tomatoes and cucumbers, eggplant and rhubarb, for years to come. He had, in his love for us, *WORKED*, to give us a REWARD to enjoy. And that bucket he held out to me, to fill with stones ... wasn't really about a little spending money ... but about *my* WORKING—indeed, *participating* in my father's WORK—so I could *enjoy his* REWARD even *more* fully.

God, in Christ, has 'WORKED' to give us the greatest REWARD creation can ever know. And God is now asking us to do some WORK—to **participate in God's WORK**—so that we ... *and* the whole world ... can *enjoy* God's REWARD—*enjoy Jesus*—as fully as possible. We've *received* the REWARD: What **is** *our* commitment [ | ] to doing *God's* WORK?

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<sup>7</sup> We Episcopalians stereotypically shy away from sharing the spirituality—the *passion*—of our faith journeys ... and much to the world's loss, I think. But Jesus Himself tells us not to *worry* about what we'll say or how we'll sound ... for "I will give you words and wisdom" that will carry the day.

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