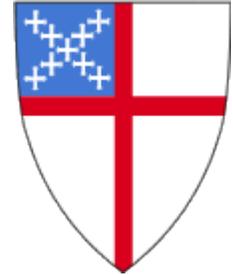


Sunday closest to June 22

Proper 7 Year C RCL
Sermon for Trinity Episcopal church
The Rev. Dr. Gail Shafer



Track 1

[1 Kings 19:1-4, \(5-7\), 8-15a](#)
[Psalm 42 and 43](#)
[Galatians 3:23-29](#)
[Luke 8:26-39](#)

This is such an amazing opportunity to share in this baptism. We have been reminded of the baptism of the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension at Pentecost, and now we share in the gift of the Spirit resting on Charlotte. With that gift, there is a bit more to understand. This child will have her whole life to learn about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and how she wants to live.

You see, God gave us free will. Every person in history is able to make choices, good and bad, that hurt or help others. He gives us messages through scripture, and sometimes more directly, what he hopes we will do, but does not, will not, and cannot make us.

Today we are very blessed to welcome into our midst a baby. Her parents are wonderful, loving people who work for the welfare of others. And we all offer prayers today for Charlotte, that she too will choose such a path.

Those of us that are parents, especially parents of grown children, know that we cannot make our children follow a path we choose. They will go their own way, listening to us at times, and at other times choosing to take their own counsel.

How difficult it must be for God, who really does know what is best for us and our world, to watch us use our free will. And we, as parents, love our children, and will always love them, just as God loves us.

Isaiah tells us that God offers himself and his salvation to a nation that did not ask for him. And we know, we are all people that don't like to be told what to do, especially if the advice is unsolicited. As a rule, we aren't always too happy about accepting the consequences of making our own decisions either.

When my son was eight, he decided he was pretty grown up, and didn't need to follow the rules about going to the baby sitter after school. So, he decided to go to friend's house instead. The baby sitter gave him a few minutes, then called me at work. It didn't take me long to get to the sitter's house. And there was indeed, no Michael. Then there were calls to every friend we could think of. Just as we

were going to call the police, Michael arrived. Completely lacking in contrition, he explained that he didn't think it would be a problem. He knew he was alright, and so I should have trusted him.

He got a clear explanation about how his behavior was had frightened me. It wasn't a case of lack of trust, but a case of fearing the big, bad world and an unsuspecting, innocent child left to his own devices. So, we had that heart to heart about how I needed to be able to rely on his following the rules, and he agreed that he would not repeat his behavior.

I felt so fortunate that as my children grew up, through the teen years, and on into college, they turned to me for advice and support. We remain close, even in their adulthoods. I can't help but believe that it was because we were honest about how our behavior affected each other. And we all agreed that we would love each other, and respect each other, no matter what.

I have to laugh sometimes, how when we buy something, and we are provided with instructions, we don't read them until something goes wrong. Not that it is exactly the same, but sometimes we don't pray, or act as Christians, until something goes wrong in our lives. Then we remember that God is there, and we can ask for help.

God is here. Always. And God loves us. There is always an open hand given to support us in our troubles, and ease our way. And we often act as those early peoples did, we refuse his outreached hands. And we often blame God for the consequences of our disobedience.

He is also there to celebrate with us, to be praised and thanked as we experience so many wonderful things, like a new life, reconciliation of family and friends, recovery from illness or surgery, a new job, and the love of our family and friends.

Those of us here, in this country, are able to experience the love of God in everyday blessings: medical miracles that offer comfort and cures to so many, good nutrition and safe homes, opportunities for education, safe employment, and the chance to enjoy long lives in peace and safety. But God does not promise a life free from challenges. There is still disease, and crime, and poverty, injury and death. But God is there to offer support and the promise of eternal salvation.

We are given the opportunity to share our good fortune with others, those who are close to us, and those who are far away.

Isiah tells us that God said:

I said, "Here I am, here I am,"

to a nation that did not call on my name.

I held out my hands all day long to a rebellious people,

who walk in a way that is not good,

*following their own devices; **Isaiah 65***

How do you see your relationship with God?

Do you reach out to those hands – or are you one of the rebellious ones? My thought is that each of us spend time reaching out, and rejecting that loving direction. Sometimes going our own way. Thinking we know best. And other times following what we understand God is asking us to do as closely as we can.

Those of us who have been called to serve God in his church, as lay ministers, volunteers, and clergy, experience that give and take throughout our lives. In those times that go well, everyone is healthy and there is little conflict – those are times that we gain confidence in our own abilities, and can forget just how much we rely on God's blessings.

I encourage all of you to remember that life happens. Good and bad. And in all of it our reliance on God is a reward in and of itself. Let God in during those good times, and God will reveal his love in the harder times. So many times, people have told me that they could not have made it through a difficult time without their faith. And so often I have heard expressions of gratitude for blessings.

Good and bad are sides of life that we cannot stop.

Have you ever heard someone say that life is just not fair? Usually that comment is made when something bad happens. I will whole heartedly agree. But sometimes life is not fair in a good way. That is my focus. Bad things happen to good people, and good things happen to good people. The sun shines on everyone, the rain falls on every field.

But we Christians have an advantage. We reach out to those hands of God – taking them in times of joy and sorrow for celebration, and for help.