

Sermon for 11 October 2026 @ Bethesda United Methodist Church

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Scriptures: Exodus 32:1-14; Psalter : Page 829 (Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23 ) : Philippians 4 :1-9 ; Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

Sermon: We start with another example of the Israelites resisting and rebelling against their role as God's special people; point out another psalm that counters their orneriness and ours, and gives us some good technique and memory verses to keep on hand; hear Paul tenderly encouraging the young church at Philippi; and close with a dramatic story of Jesus pointing out both the justice of God, and the final say of God. If you've read ahead these texts to get ready for this Sunday's worship, what do you make of the king's generosity and then his strictness? Do they remind you of your life with God, and humanity?

What about our own local government? I got a letter from the Baltimore City Board of Elections that was so full of fine print that I had to remember that freedom isn't the whole story about government. If you don't understand it, it's tough making the right choices; and if it's so complicated you can't remember everything about a proposal, that's not really being free as voters.

Then there's Jesus reminding us that we really aren't in charge of the whole picture anyway, and I get to thinking such things as: How much better are we really with all these cars and cell phones and ...

This past week, Richard Rohr, the Franciscan priest whose daily reflections I often forward to those of you who have computers, spoke about how St. Francisco got more connected to and admiring of nature in his faith ... How far we've come from that, with our cell-phones and atomic weaponry!

I went out to Buckeystown last Friday to a musicians' retreat @ Claggett, the Episcopal retreat center, and it was enriching to sit in on a session of reflecting by choir directors and organists who handle tensions and trouble-makers just like church folks everywhere... and to be reminded, like Paul does in Philippians, that getting along with each other in groups is a big part of our faith life ...

Let us pray: Dear Lord, thanks for all you do for us and the universe. Teach us how to watch and hush, and gentleness as grown-ups that never get past healing

and kindness... Make us aware of how much patience works, from others to us and us to the rest of the world... Thanks for giving us scriptures that do more than simplify things ...they help us to lean towards one another, even as that comes to us in tenderness we scarcely expect from different folks, and folks a lot like us..

Thanks, Jesus. We love you. Guard, guide, save us, and the rest of the world, all creatures, the mountains, everything, all the time and all the way. Amen.