

Sermon for 31 August 2025 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost/Labor Day Weekend

Scriptures: Jeremiah 2:4-13; Psalter: (*Insert: Alternate leader/people*) Psalm 81:1,10-16;

Hebrews 13 13:1-8, 15-16; Luke 14:1, 7-14

Sermon:

You know what these scriptures today are for. Say the word after me: *compassion*. Say it together with me: **Compassion**. Feeling together. Feeling with.

Not being sorry for. Not being sorry at all. Just *feeling together, identifying as one..*

It took us Americans awhile. We came from so many places, had so many backgrounds.... and we got side-tracked again and again. So many of us came to escape tyranny. Quite a few were on the run from some crime or trouble. Plenty of us didn't trust the rest of us. And as soon as we got the chance, groups of us banded together and took advantage of other groups and individuals.

But this land of ours was brilliant and full of miracles. After quite a while, we organized, and rebelled, and cooperated with the best ideas from the present and the past, the Greeks and Romans, the British, the Dutch and the French ... and we formed a government and worked at making it sound... and we began to get rich, some of us, enough to have courts and legislatures, and governors and even an elected President over all the states that had sprung up ... and lo and behold, there came a movement that organized labor and, eventually, took pride in it and worked on its rights, a sense of shared values, compassion, resulting in this national holiday that says the great body of citizens toil and serve the common good .... working as equals in all sorts and shapes and locales, bringing recognition and the opportunity for advancement to large spreads of the population.

Labor Day.

It's beautiful. It's biblical.

And it starts out this year with eight more weeks of the Prophet Jeremiah, which we began last week. A dialogue between a prophet and God Almighty, in the people of Israel's ongoing biography of themselves, wrestling over right and wrong. "How can you do this?" "How can they do this and get away with it?" "Why don't you stop them?" "I love them." "Take me out of this." "I marked you for this from before you were born."

And it's true. During the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., big nations overran the little one who had escaped Egyptian captivity, and their temple was destroyed ... and ever afterwards, there was and still has been this dread of messing up, and this coming back to life, with guilt and hope and all kinds of stories in between, to spin and explain our purpose under Almighty God.

As always, we particular descendants of Israel who follow the Spirit of God in Jesus, find ourselves listening to his description of things at the sum of our thinking and praying together....and today, with this theme of labor and respect and equality in our national tradition provides, we find a word about clear-headedness in our records of him that jive with Labor Day. He's not just smiling and giving us a toast. He's saying the theme is our common feeling, everybody does better when everybody does better.

And we know we haven't gotten there yet. We're competing more than cooperating. We're stuck on power and Inequality all too much. We fight and compete 'way past where humanity works right. Do better. That's the good news the whole system keeps showing you. Get with the flow, and celebrate as you share common gifts and feelings. I'll be with you. Listen. Follow. I love you. Love one another.

That's Labor Day. That's the Word of God for this day. We are all one. Give thanks, live that fact, and blessings will spread over the whole earth.

In Christ Jesus we say, Amen. Praise the Lord. God bless us, every one.

Amen.