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In today's readings two significant ideas come together: "Sabbath" and "God's Kingdom". A true understanding of Sabbath (which links, of course, with the idea of Jubilee), must lead us into the justice, mercy, equity and inclusivity of God's reign. In fact, one of the simplest ways to embrace a "Kingdom-lifestyle" is to begin to practice Sabbath well. That is the challenge the Lectionary offers us this week.

*"A significant part of the practice of Sabbath is aligning ourselves with God's rhythm. As rhythm organises a piece of music in time according to speed and pattern, so Sabbath organises our lives according to God's sense of time – God's tempo and pattern. This is more than simply giving ourselves a breather, or allowing ourselves time to rest so that we can launch back into our busyness with renewed vigour. Sabbath is about learning to recognise the significance of moments in time. It is about learning to recognise God's tempo and pattern for us, our community and our world, and it is about matching our pace with these eternal rhythms."*

## INTRODUCTIONS

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

**Jeremiah 1:4-10**: Jeremiah is called by God to be a prophet, but protests that he is too young. God promises to put God's words into

## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

Jeremiah's mouth.

OR [Isaiah 58:9b-14](#): God promises goodness and honour for God's people if they will act justly and honour the Sabbath.

[Psalm 71:1-6](#): A prayer for God's protection and care.

OR [Psalm 103:1-8](#): A song of praise and thanksgiving for God's forgiveness, healing and goodness.

[Hebrews 12:18-29](#): Unlike the people of Israel who were afraid of God's appearing at the mountain, followers of Christ have been invited into God's grace and the joyous community of worship in Christ. We have received an unshakeable kingdom, and must be careful to listen to Christ's words, and worship God in thankfulness.

[Luke 13:10-17](#): Jesus heals a crippled woman on the Sabbath, incurring the criticism of the synagogue leader. Jesus points out that everyone 'works' on the Sabbath, and that it is right and good that she should be freed.

Readings at -

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Jeremiah%201:%204-10%0Acw%20Psalm%2071:%201-6%0AHebrews%2012:%2018-29%0ALuke%2013:%2010-17](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Jeremiah%201:%204-10%0Acw%20Psalm%2071:%201-6%0AHebrews%2012:%2018-29%0ALuke%2013:%2010-17)

## LECTIONARY NOTES

[RCL: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17](#)

### Jeremiah 1:4–10

For readers interested in learning about biblical prophecy, the description of the call of the prophet Jeremiah rewards careful study. Consider reading this passage alongside three others: Deuteronomy 18 with its advice for recognizing authentic prophets; Exodus 4 with its description of Moses resisting a call to prophecy; and Isaiah 6 with its vision of seraphs and a burning coal

## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

touching the prophet's mouth. Beside these passages, the call of Jeremiah seems striking for how carefully it casts the prophet in a Mosaic mold and for how intimately the Lord calls to Jeremiah. No seraphs and burning coals here—or burning bushes, for that matter; just the “word of the Lord” saying that Jeremiah was born for the task ahead of him.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
and before you were born I consecrated you;  
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

But readers don't need to approach this passage with curiosity about prophecy or even with a desire to learn more about Jeremiah. For the account of Jeremiah's call raises a more universal question: Is God calling me?

- Have you ever felt called by God?
- Jeremiah hears the Lord's call and protests: “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” What excuses do we make to keep us from living the lives God calls us to live? How can we learn to overcome them?

## Psalm 71:1–6

The rich language of the psalms can sometimes be hard to parse, as piled-up metaphors grow slippery. In these six verses, God is described abstractly (as hope, confidence, strength); concretely (as a strong rock, a castle, a crag); as an object of a supplicant's petitions (to be free from shame, delivered from oppressors, and simply to be heard) and as an object of praise.

As happens so often in Biblical poetry, the literary features of the text take on theological force and meaning. Whatever the threat we face – however strong the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor or however weak we feel to oppose them – God can be our refuge. The range of metaphors suggests the breadth of God's power and the wideness of God's mercy – and that both, blessedly, are expansive enough in their reach for even you and for me.

## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

- How can steadfast faith be a bulwark against shame and a guard against the powers our enemies seek to exert over us? Can you think of an instance in which this has been true for you?
- How might we turn to God to keep us in safety when our enemies are not other people but rather aspects of ourselves (e.g., our love of gossip, our bitter envy, our genius for selfishness)?

### Hebrews 12:18–29

After contrasting Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion and the old and new covenants, the author of Hebrews addresses us: “See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking...”

It’s safe to presume that most mature Christians have known occasions when God’s voice seemed – for some time anyway – to have fallen silent. God’s apparent absences, whether real or imagined, can provoke spiritual crises that turn us from belief – or (if we are wise or lucky) they can lead to newer, deeper forms of faith.

This passage suggests a different sort of crisis, one triggered not by God’s silence but by God’s clarity. It’s safe to presume that most mature Christians have encountered this sort of dilemma, too: when scripture couldn’t be clearer; when our conscience awakens us to another’s suffering; when the wafer and the wine we receive at the communion rail become to us the body and blood of Christ. How can we then stubbornly refuse to reply to God’s voice? How can reverence and awe melt away till we are returned to our numb routines of carelessness and sin? The author of Hebrews urges us to respond to such instances of clarity with steadfastness and gratitude. May God help us to do so.

- What spiritual practices have helped you through instances when God’s voice seemed silent to you?
- What practices have helped nurture your gratitude for God?

## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

### Luke 13:10–17

“But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, ‘There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.’”

Why is the leader of the synagogue so indignant? Does he feel his own authority is threatened by Jesus’s display of love and power? Is he sincerely worried that the apparent (and public) violation of one of God’s laws might weaken his people’s will to adhere to others?

Perhaps he is worried about losing pledging members. If so, he has something in common with those of us today, who sometimes look around our pews on Sunday mornings with insecure thoughts buzzing about those who are not in church rather than being attentive to those who are. In an age of falling membership numbers, perhaps this passage ought to be read as a cautionary tale about how fear for an institution’s security can blind us to God’s activity in the world.

Or perhaps we ought not be so quick to dismiss the synagogue leader. “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured.” Sure, he got it wrong about the seventh day, but don’t we get it wrong about the other six? Jesus is the Great Physician, but don’t we too often behave as though his office is only open for an hour or so on Sunday mornings?

- What practices help you grow spiritually during the week? What else might be worth trying?
- How do you keep the Sabbath holy?

## SERMON

**[RCL: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17](#)**

Today’s readings and Collect can be seen as a unit teaching us about God’s power and how it works in us. The opening Collect (prayer) in the Episcopal Church says: “Grant, O merciful God, that  
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## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples...”

This power is based on the unity of the gathered, not a majority of the divided. It is a power that expresses itself in service, mercy, healing, reconciliation, and includes all of us.

Jeremiah learns about this power when he is called to be a prophet. He protests that he doesn't know how to speak well, and is merely a boy, but God tells him he is chosen for a life filled with the Spirit. He is to go and proclaim the truth everywhere, and is assured God will put the right words into his mouth. So, in the tradition of the great Biblical prophets Jeremiah goes to “destroy and overthrow; to build and to plant.”

Jeremiah teaches us that God's power is not always found in those who are mighty, wealthy or politically adroit. Like David against Goliath, God can use even a boy, and one not gifted with glibness to do God's work.

God's power sustains us. This is a teaching from the appointed Psalm 71, verse 6: “I have been sustained by you ever since I was born; from my mother's womb you have been my strength; my praise shall be always of you.” And so, Jeremiah, throughout his prophetic witness is upheld, as is Jesus while he fasts in the wilderness, and Paul as he is shipwrecked and later imprisoned.

The passage from Hebrews develops this theme of God's power in an eloquent set of verses that illustrate our relationship with the old covenant now supplanted by the New Covenant based on the “sprinkling of blood,” and then ends with the assurance that “since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire.”

The Gospel Lesson focuses on the healing of a woman on the Sabbath. Jesus's rebuttal to the leader of the synagogue is practical: “Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water?” But behind his action and the exposure of hypocrisy is the destruction of

## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

an old sacrificial system that operated the other six days of the week. Jesus heals her and asks for nothing except to praise God, which the woman freely does.

It is no longer necessary to obey all of the strict purity code, to make the necessary sacrifices. Now one simply puts one's trust in God and the power is unleashed, sometimes dramatically, sometimes quietly, but always as needed.

As the national political campaign cranks up and we are bombarded with political ads and slogans that weary us all, it helps to remember that God's power does not require gigantic sums of money, the latest and fastest technology, or the "packaging" of candidates for office.

Instead, as believers we have access to the power of the Spirit to fill our hearts and minds with God's love and promise. As the world careens along with chaos and disorder unending, God offers us the power God gave to Jeremiah, the promise to have the right words and actions given to us to do the work of an evangelist.

In our communities, among the people we see every day, are those who thirst for something other than cynicism and despair, but may not know it is there for the asking. A few weeks ago we were reminded to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Those who do so know they can walk through times of difficulty without being overcome.

Here are some pointers to help us remember how and why we are empowered:

*(Note: you may wish to elaborate on two or three of these or select one especially appropriate to the context).*

1. We received power in our Baptism through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. One of the Baptismal prayers asks that we might receive inquiring and discerning hearts, courage to will and persevere and the gift of joy and wonder (Book of Common Prayer, p. 308).

## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

2. We were sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever.
3. We do not do serve as a solo act. We are supported by a community of fellowship, love, and prayer, and the power vested in that community is nothing less than the risen body of Christ.
4. We are given the power of the Holy Spirit for one reason; we are empowered for God's service and promised that power will sustain us all the days of our life.
5. The weekly coming together of the faithful is for renewal and strength to be servants in the world and to each other.
6. Even though we may from time to time fall away from our relationship with God, God never abandons us. When we return to God in penitence we are restored and strengthened again.

So, we are called to show forth God's power to all peoples. Churches are places from which God's power and compassion emanate to a hurting and chaotic world, badly in need of God's mercy and love. We are the people called to that service. *Amen.*

## COLLECTS OF THE DAY

### Collect One

Let thy merciful ears, O Lord,  
be open to the prayers of thy humble servants;  
and that they may obtain their petitions,  
make them to ask such things as shall please thee;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Collect Two

Let your merciful ears, O Lord,  
be open to the prayers of your humble servants;  
and that they may obtain their petitions,  
make them to ask such things as shall please you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Presider or deacon*

Hearing the word of Christ, who sets us free from our ailments, let us pray for all who suffer and hurt.

*Deacon or other leader*

For this holy gathering, for the people of God in every place, and for all who seek the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For justice and righteousness among all peoples.

Lord, have mercy.

For students and teachers, and all those returning to their studies.

Lord, have mercy.

For abundant fruits of the earth, and for safety from violent storms.

Lord, have mercy.

For the hungry and the afflicted, travellers and those on vacation, prisoners, captives, and their families, and all those in danger and need.

Lord, have mercy.

For our city and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

*Presider*

God our consuming fire, hear the prayers we offer this day and continue the wonderful things that you have always done; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **POST COMMUNION**

O God,  
as we are strengthened by these holy mysteries,  
so may our lives be a continual offering,  
holy and acceptable in your sight;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **PRAYERS**

God of power and justice,  
like Jeremiah you weep over those  
who wander from you,  
turn aside to other gods,  
and enter into chaos and destruction.  
By your tears and through your mercy,  
teach us your ways  
and write them on our hearts  
so that we may follow faithfully  
the path you show us. Amen.

Friends in Christ,  
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers  
as dear to us as our own needs.  
Loving our neighbours as ourselves,  
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions  
on behalf of the church and the world.

Hear our prayers, God of power,  
and through the ministry of your Son

## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

free us from the grip of the tomb,  
that we may desire you as the fullness of life  
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,  
and guided them in the way of your love,  
so listen now to those who call upon you.  
Move us to praise your gracious will,  
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death  
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,  
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens  
and healed our spirits.  
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,  
those seeking healing,  
those in need within the church and the world.  
Hear our prayers  
that we may love you with our whole being  
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

Creator God,  
you call us to love and serve you  
with body, mind, and spirit  
through loving your creation  
and our sisters and brothers.  
Open our hearts in compassion  
and receive these petitions  
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.

Holy One,  
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards  
of the fragile bounty of this earth  
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.  
We praise your abiding guidance, O God,  
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,  
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.

## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

We offer these prayers of love  
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbours,  
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.  
Loving God,  
open our ears to hear your word  
and draw us closer to you,  
that the whole world may be one with you  
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,  
you who hear the cries of those in need,  
receive these petitions of your people  
that all who are troubled  
may know peace, comfort, and courage.  
Life-giving God,  
heal our lives,  
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds  
and offer you thanks from generation to generation  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,  
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,  
hear our prayers  
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,  
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings  
with your unending compassion.  
Redeeming Sustainer,  
visit your people  
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,  
that we may hurry to make you welcome  
not only in our concern for others,  
but by serving them  
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Living God, you formed us in the womb  
and appointed us to be prophets to the nations.  
Stretch out your hand to cure our infirmity  
and dispel our fear,

## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

that we may know the freedom of serving you in Christ and proclaim the wonders you have done. Amen.

Merciful God,  
as we pour out the wealth you have entrusted to us,  
the parched places are watered;  
as we cease our evil talk,  
the rising light of peace dawns in the darkness.  
So lead us into faithful living  
that your promises may unfold in us  
as a woman's back, long bent, unfolds at Christ's command,  
to the praise of your holy name. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we are to pray and to give more than either we desire or deserve: pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Common Worship*

God of constant mercy, who sent your Son to save us: remind us of your goodness, increase your grace within us, that our thankfulness may grow, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen *Common Worship Shorter Collect*

Merciful God, grant that your Church, being gathered by your Holy Spirit into one, may reveal your glory among all peoples, to the honour of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen  
*Methodist Worship*

Holy God, you liberate the oppressed and make a way of salvation. Unite us with all who cry for justice and lead us together into freedom; through our Lord and Liberator, Jesus Christ. Amen.  
*Methodist Worship*

Holy God, you liberate the oppressed and make a way of salvation. Unite us with all who cry for justice and lead us together into

## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

freedom; through our Lord and Liberator, Jesus Christ. Amen.

O Lord my God, I adore you as my first beginning and I long for you as my last end. Conduct me, therefore, O gracious Lord, by your wisdom. Restrain me with your justice, comfort me with your mercy, and defend me with your power; and of your love, enlighten my understanding, enflame my will and purify my soul; for Jesu's sake. Amen *Richard Challoner, 1691-1781*

Let your love fall upon the altar of our hearts,  
O Lord, as fire from heaven.

Teach us to guard and cherish its holy flame. Strengthen our souls and kindle your love within our cold hearts that we may walk before you as pilgrims eager to reach their celestial home; through Christ our Lord. Amen *Gerhard Teersteege, 1697-1769*

Lord Jesus Christ, since you have taught us that we do not live by bread alone; feed us now and evermore with the > bread which comes down from heaven, even your own self, our Saviour and our Redeemer. Amen. John Dowden, 1840-1910

We give you our thanks, O God, with reverence and awe, for before we were formed in the womb, you knew us; before we were born, you consecrated us. You are our rock and haven, to whom we can always turn. In times past you appointed prophets and put your words in their mouths, appointing them over nations and kingdoms to destroy wickedness and overthrow the ruthless, and to build justice and plant righteousness. But in these last days you have sent your son, Jesus Christ, to whom every day is a sacred new day of freedom. You have appointed him as the mediator of a new covenant, in which we are brought to the city of the living God with the angels and saints and the faithful of every age to rejoice together at the wonderful things you are doing. Through him, your living word, you reach out to us unbidden, and touch us and set us free. We glorify your most holy name.

Father and Mother of us all - we pray for those who are part of our human family and part of the community in which we live. We pray for the little ones - for those who are seen as unimportant - for those who are lost - for those who grieve as ones with no hope - for those

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## TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019

who hunger for the Bread of Heaven and thirst for the Wine of Forgiveness. Grant, we pray, that they may receive the vision that they need from your hands and the encouragement that they long for

We pray, Father, for those who are afflicted and in various ways and for all those whom we know who require a blessing - be it physical, emotional, financial, or Spiritual Touch, O God all those who are bent over and oppressed by crippling spirits - and set free all those who are afflicted by attitudes and opinions and viewpoints that cause them and others to become bowed down and to suffer needlessly. Create in them the joy that is meant to be part of the Sabbath day - the day in which we have rest from our labours and celebrate the wholeness that comes from you.

## HYMN SUGGESTIONS

### **Jeremiah 1: 4–10 [1–25]**

631\* God be in my head  
589 Lord, speak to me that I may speak  
624 Speak, Lord, in thy stillness  
597\* Take my life, and let it be

### **Psalm 71: 1–6**

Ms\* A city strong we claim as ours  
2 Faithful one, so unchanging  
459\* For all the saints who from their labours rest (vv. 1–3)  
668\* God is our fortress and our rock  
557\* Rock of ages, cleft for me  
595\* Safe in the shadow of the Lord

### **Isaiah 58: 9b–14**

206 Come, let us to the Lord our God  
647\* Guide me, O thou great Jehovah  
497\* The Church of Christ, in every age

### **Psalm 103: 1–8**

1 Bless the Lord, my soul

## **TRINITY 10, Year C, August 11, 2019**

686\* Bless the Lord, the God of our forebears

688\* Come, bless the Lord, God of our forebears

349\* Fill thou my life, O Lord my God

366\* Praise, my soul, the King of heaven

365\* Praise to the Lord, the almighty, the King of creation

660\* Thine for ever! God of love

47\* [We plough the fields and scatter]

374\* When all thy mercies, O my God

### **2nd Reading Hebrews 12: 18–29**

646\* Glorious things of thee are spoken

220\* [Glory be to Jesus]

668\* God is our fortress and our rock

619\* Lord, teach us how to pray aright

638\* O for a heart to praise my God

281\* Rejoice, the Lord is King

### **The Gospel Luke 13: 10–17**

124\* [Hark the glad sound! the Saviour comes]

104\* O for a thousand tongues to sing

514\* We cannot measure how you heal

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