

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, July 30, 2017

The Collect: O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Genesis 29:15-28 read from The Message Bible

“Just because you’re my nephew, you shouldn’t work for me for nothing. Tell me what you want to be paid. What’s a fair wage?”

Now Laban had two daughters; Leah was the older and Rachel the younger. Leah had nice eyes, but Rachel was stunningly beautiful. And it was Rachel that Jacob loved.

So Jacob answered, “I will work for you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.”

“It is far better,” said Laban, “that I give her to you than marry her to some outsider. Yes. Stay here with me.”

So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel. But it only seemed like a few days, he loved her so much.

Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife; I’ve completed what we agreed I’d do. I’m ready to consummate my marriage.” Laban invited everyone around and threw a big feast. At evening, though, he got his daughter Leah and brought her to the marriage bed, and Jacob slept with her. (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maid.)

Morning came: There was Leah in the marriage bed!

Jacob confronted Laban, “What have you done to me? Didn’t I work all this time for the hand of Rachel? Why did you cheat me?”

“We don’t do it that way in our country,” said Laban. “We don’t marry off the younger daughter before the older. Enjoy your week of honeymoon, and then we’ll give you the other one also. But it will cost you another seven years of work.”

Jacob agreed. When he’d completed the honeymoon week, Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 105:1-11, 45b read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name; * make known his deeds among the peoples.

2 Sing to him, sing praises to him, * and speak of all his marvelous works.

3 Glory in his holy Name; * let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

4 Search for the Lord and his strength; * continually seek his face.

5 Remember the marvels he has done, * his wonders and the judgments of his mouth,

6 O offspring of Abraham his servant, * O children of Jacob his chosen.

7 He is the Lord our God; * his judgments prevail in all the world.

8 He has always been mindful of his covenant, * the promise he made for a thousand generations:

9 The covenant he made with Abraham, * the oath that he swore to Isaac,

10 Which he established as a statute for Jacob, * an everlasting covenant for Israel,

11 Saying, "To you will I give the land of Canaan * to be your allotted inheritance."

45b Hallelujah!

Epistle: Romans 8:26-39 read from The Modern English Version Bible

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, who is risen, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:

“For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52 read from the New American Standard Bible

He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”

He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid

again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all these things?” They said to Him, “Yes.” And Jesus said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On August 2nd we celebrate the life of Samuel Ferguson, Missionary Bishop for West Africa

Samuel David Ferguson was the first African American bishop in The Episcopal Church accorded the full honors due his position. While there had been other African American bishops before him, Bishop Ferguson was the first to be seated in the House of Bishops, and he took his role in the House with utmost sincerity and integrity, as an example to those around him. From celebrating the opening Eucharist of the 1910 General Convention to attending societ events in the South, Bishop Ferguson modeled a dignity and strength that communicated his equal stature as an Episcopal bishop despite the discrimination he faced.

Ferguson was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on January 1st, 1842, but grew up in Liberia, West Africa, having moved there with his family at the age of six. He attended mission schools that were sponsored by The Episcopal Church and eventually became a teacher.

Ferguson was ordained a deacon in 1865 and a priest in 1867, serving first as curate and

then as rector of St. Mark's Church, Harper Liberia. Called to be the fourth bishop of Cape Palmas (later the Diocese of Liberia) in 1885, his ordination to the episcopate took place at Grace Church in New York City. He was the first American-born black to become Bishop of Liberia.

Consistent with his first vocation as a teacher, Ferguson emphasized the importance of education throughout his ministry. He founded schools throughout Liberia, assisted financially by the Women's Auxiliary, later to be called the United Thank Offering (UTO) of the Episcopal Church Women, and his passion for education influenced other parts of West Africa.

With the generous support of Robert Fulton Cutting, a wealthy New York financier, who served for a time as the treasurer of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, Bishop Ferguson founded Cuttington College in 1889, where, in addition to basic studies, theological, agricultural, and industrial education were emphasized. Ferguson believed that establishing a strong spiritual and educational foundation was the best way for Liberia's young people to transform society. Although interrupted during the Liberian civil wars of 1989-1996 and 1999-2003, the college, now Cuttington University, resumed its mission to serve the people of Liberia in 2004, thus fulfilling Bishop Ferguson's vision.

Bishop Ferguson remained in Liberia for the rest of his life. He died in Monrovia on August 2nd, 1916.

Let us pray: Almighty God, who raised up your servant Samuel Ferguson and inspired in him a missionary vision of your Church in education and ministry: Stir up in us through his example a zeal for a Church, alive with your Holy Word, reaching forth in love and service to all; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**