

**Trinity Church Wall Street 11:15am Holy Eucharist – Trinity Sunday
The Rev. Elizabeth Blunt Transcript**

“Fruits to Nurture, Savor, and Share”

“How could we be more aware than we are this morning that the world is still broken?” At Trinity’s Sunday worship, the Rev. Beth Blunt reminded us that we’re in the short season of Ascensiontide, after Jesus has departed and before the arrival of the Holy Spirit, and that our current life is also a challenging “in-between” time as we try to live with the joy of the Risen Christ while in grief over the violence of the past two weeks. Mother Beth admits that it is a difficult place to inhabit, but offers a few suggestions on how we can live in such a time as this. Watch the sermon. The readings are Acts 16:16–34; Psalm 97; Revelation 22:12–14, 16–17, 20–21; and John 17:20–26.

Sermon Transcript:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be always acceptable unto thee, oh God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen. Amen. Please be seated.

I wonder what this room would sound like if the meditations of all our hearts could be broadcast this morning. It'd be a mixed bag, of course, because life is never just one thing. But it's been a hard week in a series of hard weeks. I hope you all are doing okay and I hope you'll let us know if you're not. This is the seventh Sunday in the season of Easter. We have one to go, and that last one will be Pentecost. But we're also in a bit of a strange in-between place in our sacred year because we commemorated Jesus's ascension, his return to heaven 40 days after the resurrection, just this past Thursday. That's why you can hear notes of triumphalism and royalty and our music and liturgical notes. So here we are, much like the first disciples left to keep on Eastering, keep on celebrating and anticipating the arrival of the Holy Spirit, while also navigating a certain sense of loss. Jesus has triumphed, and Jesus has departed. All through Easter tide or Sunday reason readings have followed really a carefully plotted trajectory that reaches its completion this morning. In place of our usual first readings from the Hebrew scriptures for the past seven weeks, we've been hearing from the book of Acts, which is the New Testaments chronicle of major moments in the life of the early church. We heard about the conversion of Saint Paul, about the first missionary visits of St. Peter.

We heard about the painful negotiations that eventually open the Christian community to Gentiles. And this week and last, we zeroed in on the churches geographical expansion into foreign realms. A hint of what's to come. Beginning in storied Philippi, the city that was named for the father of Alexander the Great. The heart of the Hellenistic world, claimed as a Roman colony in about 40 BCE when Mark Antony defeated Brutus there. Last week we saw Lydia, a Philippians merchant of purple cloth, become the first recorded European Christian. Her household and the household of the jailer we heard about this

morning really became the pillars of a central metropolitan hub in the early Christian landscape. So Acts in the season of Easter. And then alongside those stories of beginnings, we've heard excerpts from the end of the Gospel of John, starting logically with Jesus's resurrection appearances to Thomas and the rest of the 11 in Jerusalem. Then again at the Sea of Galilee. But then shifting back a few chapters to the night of his arrest, back to The Last Supper, where Jesus tried to prepare his disciples to help them understand that where he was going they could not yet come. The night when he gave them the new commandment to love. and then showed them what he meant. John 13 through 17 is really an extended farewell, content filled farewell, where Jesus explains to his beloved community how they are to move forward without him. The essential information for every generation of Christians. This morning, we heard that lessons conclusion. We heard Jesus' last words before the authorities arrived. And for my money, this is one of the most moving moments in the scripture because this is Jesus praying for us.

Looking through the fabric of time, recognizing and loving all of those who would come to believe and asking the father that they too might be with him and might in the course of their mortal lives experience that paradoxical mutual indwelling of believer's one with another, with Jesus and with God, this kind of breathing and eternal embrace of unity. Jesus prayed for you and for me, Jesus gave us instructions that would help us navigate this time in-between because he knew it was not gonna be easy. How could we be more aware than we are this morning that the world is still broken. This weekend, we intended to mourn and honor those who gave their lives in service to our country, who sacrificed all for what they understood as the common good. But now we have to also mourn in the lives of so many brothers and sisters, children, teachers, our elders. Those who sought to worship God in peace, as we do this morning, taken from us for no reason, taken by evil. Sometimes even we left-leaning progressive squishy Christians feel welling up in us, a longing for the God of Psalm 97, "The God who goes forth with a fire before him, burning up the wicked. A God hurling bolts of lightning before whom the mountains melt. The spirit and the bride say, come and let everyone who hears say, come, amen, come Lord Jesus". Often, if I take a step back, I can easily see how strange these stories we tell and these things we say as Christians must seem to the world. But on warnings like this, I'm reminded of the fact that this old tale becomes maybe most intelligible in times when we most recognize our need for a remedy for justice, for God. The episodes of Acts can come across as kind of Kooky adventures with colorful characters and magic and miracles. But consider the things truly at the heart of Paul's second day in Macedonia. In the midst of planting the beloved community, he would eventually call his joy and his crown. He casts out a foreign Spirit occupying a young woman. Now this is a work of compassion, even if it came from partly a cranky place.

Paul's rewarded for that action with malicious revenge. The woman's owners, mercenaries who exploit her for their own profit, concoct foul collection of false claims that should feel pretty familiar to us. It's a stew of lies and half truths, intentionally designed to stir up people's worst impulses. In this case, racism and xenophobia. These men are Jews, they say. Foreigners perverting our customs. And it works. Paul and Silas are seized, stripped, beaten, and locked up in the darkest and most dangerous part of the prison. Paul persevered in faith and in patients and ethical dignity. And through Him, God works his purpose. All of this should feel to us like shades of Jesus who was betrayed, convicted on false charges,

ostracized, abused, executed, and yet raised to a new life that gave hope to the whole world. What can we do in this present generation, this place where we live in joyous expectation and yet also so often in grief. First, we can keep telling the world about Jesus. Whose great love took away all the power of hate, who's gone ahead to prepare a place for us and promised, as the Bishop of West Texas said, that death will not be the final thing to be said about the children of you've Aldi, or about any of us, or our heroes or others we've loved and lost. We can keep telling the truth even when it's not what the world wants to hear. This week, that truth is that American mental health is a problem that needs to be far more seriously considered and meaningfully and compassionately addressed. And that reasonable regulation of firearms is a step we must take and must take now. You and I in our time can decide to keep feeling, to keep asking our hearts to be flesh, to share in the joy and the pain of our neighbors and to keep praying. One of my fellow pastor said this week that prayer is its own kind of protest. Above all, Jesus says that regardless of the grotesque glories of hate around us, we must keep practicing a life of love. We must keep creating and contributing to communities that honor humility and self-sacrifice and forgiveness. That keeps stumbling toward unity and casting that unity further and further beyond themselves. If you didn't get to listen to Father Phil sermon from Thursday night, I would highly recommend that you do. He described our task as Christians as collecting fragments of light. I love that. And I hear that same sentiment in our psalm today. For all its ferocity, it resolves into this gorgeous image of God sowing light for the righteous. Light sown by God must result in a harvest of light. Those fruits are ours to look for, to nurture, to savor, and to share.

Amen.