



Diocese of the Virgin Islands  
(Episcopal Church / Anglican)

The Episcopal Church of the Virgin Islands, Incorporated

Founded 1947 \* Incorporated 1972

P.O. Box 7488, St. Thomas, VI 00801 340-776-1797 \*Fax 340-777-8485

Office of the Bishop

[bpambrose@edotvi.org](mailto:bpambrose@edotvi.org)

**PASTORAL MESSAGE FOR THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
NOVEMBER 8, 2020**

**TO THE CLERGY, PEOPLE OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS AND OUR VIRTUAL VIEWERS AND LISTENERS ON RADIO AND READERS OF THE DAILY NEWS**

***Now, therefore revere the Lord, and only serve the Lord in sincerity and in faithfulness. Joshua 24:14.***

By this time Joshua would have delivered the people he was chosen to lead safely into their promised inheritance. And so that they do not forget who delivered them from the evil pestilence and brought them safely to their inheritance as on eagle wings, they were reminded again not to forget how they got there and always to revere their supreme deliverer. The exact admonition from Joshua was, “*Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve the Lord in sincerity and in faithfulness.*”

The future existence of the inhabitants was so crucial that Joshua challenged them to make a decision. He said, “*Now, if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.*” Then the people responded, “*Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and did those great signs in our sight. The Lord protected us along all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed... Therefore, we also will serve the Lord, for the Lord is the holy God.*”  
Joshua 24: 16-18

Having that passage from the sacred text shared with us at this time should call to mind the pilgrimage we are on, and who is with us as we navigate our way towards wholeness. In all of these Virgin Islands our governments are frequently sharing with us new revelations as they are revealed by those knowledgeable of the sciences. Somehow with knowledge of our past history and culture, we are to have a sense of security as we progress, knowing that we are hearing from the Lord and will continue to hear from the Lord through the mediums the Lord has provided.

*See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them. Isaiah 42:9*

**Pastoral Message For The Twenty-Third Sunday After Pentecost**

**November 8, 2020**

**Page 2**

If we as a people are going to endure, we cannot face this pandemic in our own strength. Many of us must have heard the old adage, 'in our own strength, we are no match for the enemy'. COVID-19 is an enemy and is proving that if we defy the protocols and procedures provided for our protection against the enemy, we will not win.

This is exactly what Joshua was saying to the community he served. They had to trust and obey; and they had reason to do so based on all the things they themselves encountered because of God's providence among them from the time they were delivered from slavery to the time they entered their promised inheritance. We no longer hear them complaining of all the things they wanted during the pilgrimage but did not receive. They are now singing the praises of God and telling of all the wonderful signs and wonders God did on their behalf.

You see, sometimes the clouds and darkness may hide the light of the sun, but the sun is still shining and eventually will shine through the darkness to accomplish its purpose for the day. Therefore, while we may be under the cloud these days without knowledge of when the cloud will lift and let the sun shine through, if we recall the word of God to those followers who were faithful to the end, we too must learn to be faithful and have hope. We will see in the darkness of this time the promise of rain and then, when the sun shines and new life returns to the face of the earth, then we will see the good that came out of our periods of anxiety and turmoil.

Throughout these Virgin Islands and the nations of the world, communities of faith are struggling with this pandemic. Many are trying to challenge it in their own strength and are discovering that the pandemic is no respecter of persons. Those who challenge it in the strength of Jesus and the knowledge that comes from the word of God and those gifted by God will endure and overcome.

As we continue this journey through COVID-19, let it not enslave us. We have freedom in Christ who promised to be with us through all the changes scenes of this life. At this time, let us look to the hills from whence we can find strength. We know from nature that not many trees bear fruit immediately after the first or second rains. It takes a while before we can enjoy the end product. As the hymn writer puts it, 'first the blade, and then the ear, then the full corn shall appear.' Therein lies a lesson from one of God's physical examples of His providence through nature.

Where we are today is not where we were nine months ago. God is working God's purpose out as each day unfolds. As one hymn writer states and still rings true today, God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year. Therefore, each day we are alive, we are closer to receiving our promised inheritance than when we first began this journey. Knowing that there is a promised inheritance awaiting us should give us hope that will affect all that we do or say. We will see, that even in the midst of the storms of life, there is something for which to be thankful. If we try to count the

*See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them. Isaiah 42:9*

**Pastoral Message For The Twenty-Third Sunday After Pentecost**

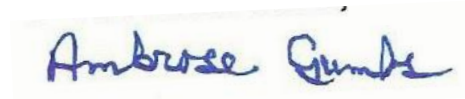
**November 8, 2020**

**Page 3**

many blessings we have received through the providence of God, by the time we are through counting, we will find there is much more for which we are to be thankful.

So, give thanks with a grateful heart. Amen

Grace and Peace,



The Rt. Rev. E. Ambrose Gumbs, D.D.

Bishop of The Episcopal Diocese of the Virgin Islands

*See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them. Isaiah 42:9*