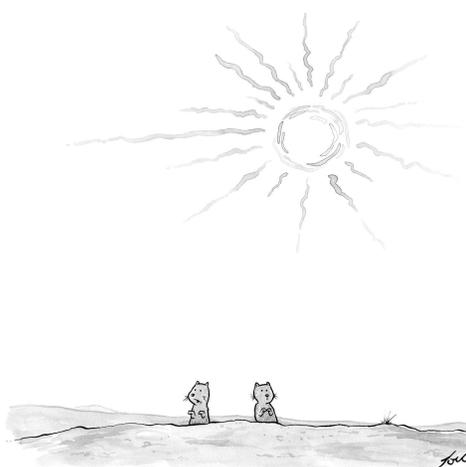




Proper 10, The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost  
Rev. Jonathan Stepp  
July 12, 2020

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Before we launch into today's sermon, let's take a look at a few cartoon to add some humor to our Sunday:



*"Other than the constant looming threat of danger, it's a beautiful day."*



*"Hub. According to this, I've logged more screen hours than actually exist in a day."*



Last Sunday we heard these powerful and comforting words from Jesus, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." This Sunday we hear similar words from St. Paul in his letter to the Romans: "those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. . . to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

These words are so simple and so direct that their profound depth may escape us at first. We should pause and think for a moment: isn't life and peace what we all long for? Isn't life and peace at the very heart of the deepest longing of the human soul for fulfillment, purpose, and relationship?

Clearly, St. Paul has in mind here a certain quality of life. He is not merely talking about existence, about our hearts beating and our lungs breathing. He is talking about the fullness of life as God experiences life – a life of dynamic, joyful, relationship. And when he speaks of "peace", he clearly has something in mind that is

much more profound than the mere absence of conflict. He has in mind what the Jewish people called “shalom.” It is the peace that comes from being in dynamic, joyful, relationship with others – knowing our friends and family as they truly are, loving them unconditionally for who they are, and, in return, being known and loved as we truly are.

This kind of life and peace is what we were created for and it is what we long for. If we do not find it in the right places we will seek it in the wrong places – in the ruthless pursuit of wealth, in self-medicating drugs, or in competitive and conflicted relationships. St. Paul tells us what Jesus told us last week: there is only one right place to seek the life and peace for which we were created and for which our souls are longing. We will find life and peace when we seek them in the one who Created and Redeemed us.

“Set your mind on the things of the Spirit,” we are told. In the Holy Spirit of Jesus, which comes to us from the Father through the Son, we will find the source of life and peace. We will find the longing of our souls fulfilled.

How do we set our minds on the things of the Spirit? What does that look like? Consider these three ways of setting our minds on the things of the Spirit:

Silence. As long as we are chattering away, in person or by text message, and as long as we are chattering away in our minds to ourselves, we will never really hear the Holy Spirit. We must find a time and a place to be silent: while walking, jogging, gardening, or simply sitting in a quiet place.

Secondly, the words of Christ. We need to know what God says to us through Jesus if we are to be able to distinguish the words of the Holy Spirit from the words of our own fearful doubts or the criticizing words of others. If you have trouble reading and understanding the Bible, I recommend you try out a dynamic paraphrase of the scriptures such as The Message Bible. Such paraphrases can bring a fresh new perspective to your reading.

Finally, prayer. The Book of Common Prayer is filled with beautiful prayers. Find one or two that speak to your heart and that say what you long to say to God, and then stick with them for a while. Try saying the Lord’s Prayer and then the one or two prayers you pick from the Prayer Book every day, maybe even twice a day, for a week or two and then see if going over these prayers again and again helps you to see more deeply into God’s heart. Silence, the words of Christ, and prayer – these are simple ways of setting our minds the things of the Spirit and they can bring rich and deep connection with the life and peace of God – if we will

baptize ourselves in their holiness and allow Christ to transform our souls through them. May God give us the grace to turn our hearts and minds towards him and his Spirit.

Amen.