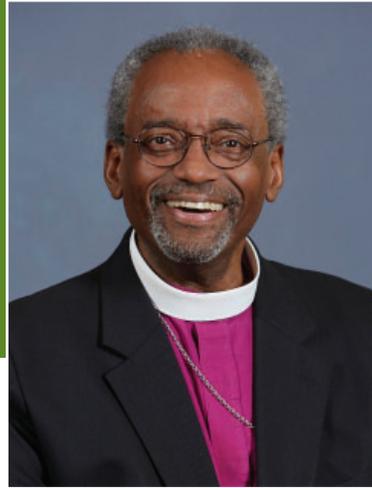


SUNDAY, SEPT. 20, 2020

Presiding Bishop Michael
Curry, The Episcopal Church

+ Pentecost 16 (Lectionary 25)

Exodus 16:2-15 | Psalm 105:1-6,
37-45 | Philippians 1:21-30 |
Matthew 20:1-16



*My desire is to depart
and be with Christ, for
that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is
more necessary for you.* Philippians 1:23b-24

There are a lot of good hymns and spirituals about heaven and how wonderful it will be to rest from our labors and be there with the Lord. And this is true. The apostle Paul, when he wrote his letter to the Philippian Christians, was in prison and didn't know if he was about to die. If so, he said, that would be just fine: "To die is gain." But he went on to say that, although this world and its problems can be tiresome, he needed to stick around because there was still work to do. To remain, for Paul and for us, was "necessary for you."

Now, "you" isn't just our loved ones, or even our neighbors, co-workers and folks we meet. "You" is also the world in which we live and breathe, the vineyard in which we toil. To "remain in the flesh" is hard work, because it calls us to be ever more intentional in our care for all around us, including

creation itself. German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer once affirmed that "it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith." This world, and all that it holds, is in God's hands. But as long as we remain in the flesh, then by God's call it is in our hands as well.

Liberating, life-giving God, help us to know that we and the world you have created are truly the work of your hands. Give us knowledge and wisdom to care for your handiwork now and for future generations. Amen.

Suggested hymn: "**He's Got the Whole World in His Hands**" (Lift Every Voice and Sing II, 217).