

**"Open your mouth and I will fill it."**  
The Second Sunday after Pentecost  
Proper 4  
2 June 2024  
Trinity-St.Peter's Episcopal Church  
San Francisco, California

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Deuteronomy 5:12-15  
Psalm 81:1-10  
II Corinthians 4:5-12  
St. Mark 2:23-36

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**Raising a song.**

Usually in my preaching I attempt to make comment on all of the readings for a given Sunday. They usually speak to one another, exercising a common voice, lifting up a common vision, or complementing one to the other on all the visions presented by the various authors. Today, however, I am going to limit myself to Psalm 81, at least to the verses that are included in the lectionary for today. The psalm begins with an invitation to praise: *"Start the music."* The psalmist then invites various participants and instruments of music, *"sound the drum, the melodious lyre and harp."* One can almost hear the noise of the orchestra. When I was six years old, my father took me to hear the Albuquerque Symphony. What I remember most from the evening is not what was played, (it was night on Bald Mountain) but rather the sound of the orchestra tuning up, finding its common pitch. To this day, whenever I hear the noise of the orchestra tuning up, I am transported back to that time with my father, and the wonder of music that was soon to sound in my ears.

There is purpose to this music, however. *“sound the New Moon trumpet, at the full moon, on our feast day.”* The music is first of all a remembrance, of what God has done. In the Hebrew Calendar this festival is called *Rosh Chodesh*. It is announced every 30 or 29 days, each month of the year is greeted with praise. But why? We might ask...

### **Rejoicing over what?**

If this is a song of thanksgiving, what is the thanksgiving for? First of all, I think, it is a thanksgiving for the gift of time itself. The gift of days, hours, minutes – the time of our lives – the time of our living in covenant with God – this is what is given thanks for. I am always reminded of a line from a Goethe poem, *“Zeit ist Gnade.”* “Time is grace.” That we live and exist in time, is a grace unto itself. And as we continue in time, we become aware of many graces that greet us each day.

The second reason for this psalm of thanksgiving is the gift of freedom, freedom from slavery in Egypt. This liberation becomes a type that the Gospel writers, and Paul use to illustrate our redemption in time. Listen to this, *“it was I who relieved your shoulder of the burden, your hands could drop the laborer’s basket. You called in trouble, so I rescued you.”* God reminds God’s people of the works God has done for them, and they are bound to give thanks and to rejoice.

What is given to you in your life, in your day-to-day life, that might cause you to rejoice, to give thanks, to sing a song of praise? I would love to hear your stories of thanksgiving, and rejoicing. I need to listen to my own as well. I and you need to announce to those living around and about us of the love that God has shown to us,

causing our song of praise. That should be an easy thing in this community that has invested so much in music, praise, and thanksgiving for just being here. But there is more...

### **Filling our mouths.**

The closing line of the psalm is quite startling. *"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."* There are so many possibilities here. In today's Gospel the disciples fill themselves with grain from the field, discarding the rules regarding work on the sabbath. But I think that is not about food. This is about something more than food. In this regard I am remembering something that Saint Paul writes in Romans. If our mouths are empty, they are soon filled with sounds, breath, and words given by the Holy Spirit. *"In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings."* Perhaps we do not know how to give thanks, or even what to give thanks for, why we ought to praise God. The Spirit can fill our mouths with what we ought to speak, with what we need to proclaim, with what words we ought to give thanks.

In the Gospel of John, in one of the Resurrection Appearances to the disciples, Jesus come to them, and breathes on them. He recreates them, he fills them with the words of Good News which they will announce to others. When strangers come to visit in this place, let us pray that God would fill our mouths with Good News, with praise, and invitation.

I have a thanksgiving on this day. Fiftythree years ago hands were laid on me and I was made a priest. I thank God for the work that we have been able to do together, for the words you have shared with me and for the opportunity to share the Word with you. On this day, my mouth is filled with thanksgiving and joy. May all of us share in such Good News.

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