**Sermon From the Lessons**

**I’m preaching differently this morning. Because three readings from Proper 19 are simply jumping off the page. The words these three readings offer us are as important in our time as they were when they were written many centuries ago. I'm going to comment on the Old Testament reading, then comment on the New Testament reading, and lastly on the Psalm because this particular Psalm is a poetic message of hope for all of us.**

**From the Old Testament, Wisdom speaks to us. “Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates, she speaks…” Today those who stand on street corners, walk in marches for the good of people, or stand at the gates to be heard, while others call forth the message of hope in our country. We the people still rise and speak out for the rights of all our brothers and sisters who need our help. We stand on corners and speak out, we march in protest to those who would hurt people, and those who would hurt all life on earth.**

 **Centuries before Christ was born, Wisdom spoke out for the rights of all people. We who love the earth and all those who are live upon her, can remember we’re not the first group of people, or the last who will protest at the gates of power, and march for the rights of all. We are not alone when we remember Wisdom is leading our efforts for peace and good will in our time. She leaves all of us with this message: “I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you.” Wisdom also leaves us with another messages. “How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate …therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices” I say to you and me and all the other people who might be feeling downtrodden with each day bringing us more and more horror stories, light will always triumph over evil. This is true for always and forever.**

 **From the New Testament, James speaks to us as if we were the only ones hearing his message. He tells us, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes.” Those of us who have taught anything at any time, must hear these words with a certain amount of depredation. I certainly do; I’ve been teaching one thing or another since I was twenty- three years old. That’s a whole lot of time to think about all the mistakes I’ve made. First as a high school art teacher. Then teaching art therapy, next came years of putting together a ceremony for healing the earth. Now as a priest. All anyone of us can do is move along through our lives, praying the good we do is greater than the damage we might cause.**

### James doesn’t mince words. He said to all of us, “How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! He also said, the tongue is a fire. “The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell.” Metaphorically and in actual times of our lives, our nation has little fires everywhere. Some fires are lit by untruthful lies spewed about to hurt others. Right now, fires are burning down to the ground homes, forests, and destroying habitats for animals. While California continues to burn and be destroyed, climate change is a definite threat for all of us. All we can do is what can do. We can give financial help to people and all creatures great and small who are suffering. We can recycle all we can. We can pray for our earth and all people and animals who are put in harm’s way because of climate change.

### Seeing destruction on the television is not the same as seeing devastation in person. John and I have driven through the Ninth Ward in New Orleans before this latest storm. Even before this storm hit the Ninth Ward in New Orleans, it looked depressed and downtrodden. We have driven through the city in Northern California where we used to live. Fire has brought the hills around our city down to its knees. Homes were totally destroyed and the land around those burned-out homes was equally hard hit by a seemingly endless blaze, Something is lost to all of us when our lands are burned, and our homes destroyed. Yet we have been given the gift of prayer. In these times of such endless destruction, we can send our prayers up to help the many people and animals who are hurting right now.

**The poetry from just one psalm can remind us God is always with us from the beginning until the end. Here is some of the poetry from the Psalm this morning, Psalm 19. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork”. I wasn’t sure what firmament meant in the Bible. Here is one definition. In** **biblical cosmology, the firmament is the vast solid dome created by God on the second day. To divide the sea into upper and lower portions so that the dry land could appear. Now we have the sea and dry land, and the word firmament is a grand word. We are part of the earth’s half of the firmament. I’m grateful to be part of the firmament God created for all the people and the animals who have ever lived in this firmament and for those who will be part of the firmament in their time.
 Here is the last quotation for this morning. “One day tells its tale to another, and one night imparts knowledge to another. Although they have no words or language, and their voices are not heard. Their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message to the ends of the world.” If you’ve been on a large portion of land, where the winds blow freely, and the land responds with a quiet ringing sound. In the peace which passes all understanding, we can hear the sound of God holding us for now and forever and forever. Amen**