

# Church of the Good Shepherd and St. John the Evangelist

15 Pentecost  
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Fr. Bill McGinty

## **“The Bridge”**

The story of the birth of Moses is so dramatic that it is hard to ever forget, which is the precise intent of its author. Not only does it begin the great Hebrew saga of salvation, but it is important to Matthew the writer of our Gospel passage today.

Matthew sees Moses as pre-figuring Christ the Messiah. Matthew's birth narrative of Jesus has so many parallels with the Moses story. Both are rescued by the hand of God, from an early death. Both escape tyrants and their evil intent. Both have Egypt in their birth story. Both are seen as destined to be leaders of their people. So absorbed is Matthew with this comparison that what he is really saying is, that Jesus is the culmination of all that began with Moses thirteen hundred years before.

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's plan, Mathew tells us. Throughout the Old Testament God has been revealing himself through the Prophets, individuals and sacred writings. Now, who God is, and what he wants, is made plain in the person of Jesus.

Jesus is about access. His life and ministry give to people what the Old Testament could not. Jesus makes it possible for man to embrace God and his ways. Jesus is the key to the Kingdom of heaven. Being God and man, he for the first time unites us with the author and creator of all life.

For several weeks now, Matthew has been telling us this in Gospel story after story. Just a few weeks ago we had Jesus walking on water. Israel's salvation began with the Red Sea and escape via water. Last week the Canaanite woman pleas for Jesus to save her daughter and Jesus refers to the bread of the Israelites. There are images there of Passover and the bread the Israelites ate before their epic journey. That Passover will be repeated in Matthew's Gospel before Jesus crosses over from death to eternal life. He becomes the bridge to man's salvation. He achieves with his life of love, service and sacrifice what none of us can achieve. He deserves the love of God his Father. That love he passes on to us as grace.

A bridge is a wonderful symbolic and one that we probably do not use often enough. In 1890 the Anglican community in the Port of Liverpool, decided that they needed to build a Cathedral. The city had grown from a small fishing village in the 1700's to becoming the most important port in the whole of Britain. Into the port sailed ships from all around the world. Yet, more than anything else, Liverpool grew because of the cotton trade with Georgia and the Carolina's. It was the trade that fueled the Industrial Revolution for 200 years.

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So when they built their Cathedral, the Anglicans chose a site high above the city overlooking the port, the Estuary, and the Irish Sea. It was called Brownlow Hill and there they built a Cathedral of rich deep red sandstone. Half way down the nave of that great church, is a sandstone bridge thirty feet in the air that sweeps and arches across the church from East to West. Into the sandstone is carved the words: "Jesus Christ is the bridge to my salvation."

You and I know that we cannot part the Red Sea, nor can we walk on water, that often Jesus turns to his disciples in today's story from Matthew's Gospel and says to them: "Do you truly know who I am?" In answering him Peter uses the word Messiah, the Christ. But we are left wondering if he really knows what that means.

From time to time, we too have to remind ourselves. This is no earthy person that we follow. This is no human king that we worship; this is the Son of God, the King of our Salvation. Already people are noticing at the 10 'o clock service that we have chosen majestic hymns in the Pentecost season, related to Jesus, his Kingship, his Praise and his Victory. They are deeply Anglicans, something we could not attempt before the organ. We try to remind ourselves of who Jesus is and his plan and role in our life.

Yesterday, at 12 noon, Victor Marshall, the father of our own Bishop Paul, crossed over that bridge to eternal life. He had been ill for some time and Bishop Paul visited him on Thursday. "How long?" asked his Father. "How long will this pain and suffering go on?" "Not long, Dad" Paul told him and there together they said their goodbyes.

Jesus invitation to all of us is to set foot on that bridge. It is a bridge we need to cross long before death comes anywhere near. It is the bridge that puts us on the right side.

Paul in Romans 12 today, tells the Christians: "You must be transformed by the renewing of your minds." Christ has laid his sacred body down that we might cross over to a new level of existence, a new life of grace. Because of that, we are gifted by the Holy Spirit with the grace in which we stand that should permeate all of our life.

Sad to say, Christ, his life, his sacrifice are ignored by our world. Even as Christians we find ourselves relegating Jesus in our priorities. Paul tells us: "Do not do that. You need Christ as the center of your life. You need the grace that flows from his sacrifice. You need to cross that bridge to a life of the Spirit. "Do that," says Jesus, "and I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven."

Let us pray for Victor Marshall in this service, Bishop Paul and all his family.

Amen+

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