



**Trinity Church Wall Street 11:15am Holy Eucharist – Trinity Sunday
The Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry Transcript**

“Come, Let Us Go to the Mountain”

Preaching at our September 11 Requiem Holy Eucharist, the Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, remarked, “We observe this solemn occasion at a perilous moment in our national life and history. The seeds of self-centeredness and hatred will inevitably yield a bitter harvest.” And yet there is hope to be found. But only if we remember the sacrifice and unity that followed that dark day in 2001, and “go to the mountain” by fiercely recommittting ourselves to “a love that gives and does not count the cost.” The readings are Isaiah 61:1–4; Psalm 31 and Matthew 5:1–10.

Sermon Transcript:

Now, in the name of our loving, liberating, and life-giving God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good morning Trinity Church! I want to thank your bishop and my brother and colleague and your priest in charge, Father Phil, wherever they are, and the clergy, Vestry, the people, this incredible choir and music ministry and all of you, the people of this church and community, and those who have weathered the storm that was truly storm on 9/11 here in this city. And who have weathered and still weathering a global pandemic. New York tough. New York tough. I bring you solemn greetings from your brothers, sisters, siblings, who are the Episcopal church, wherever they may be and assure you you have been prayed for a lot, and we won't stop. As the traditions says 'pray for me and I for thee, and merrily we shall meet in heaven.' But for the time being, it's good to be here. It is good to be here. Allow me to offer two texts. It's a dangerous thing to do I was told in seminary but nonetheless, I've been out for 40 years so I've forgotten half of what I learned there anyway. The first one comes from the second Chapter of the prophet Isaiah and the second from the gospel. From Isaiah, "In the days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest mountain, and it shall be raised above all hills and all nations shall stream to it, and many peoples shall come and say, come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord that he may teach us is ways that we may walk in his paths.

Then they will beat their swords into plow shares, their spears into pruning hooks. Then nation will not rise up against nation, and neither shall they learn war anymore." Come, let us go to the mountain that he may teach us his ways. From the fifth chapter of Matthew, when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain. After he sat down, he began to teach them. Come. Let us go to the mountain. Or as the oldest slaves used to say, "Upon the mountain, my Lord spoke. Out of his mouth, came fire and smoke. Every time I feel the spirit moving in my heart, I could pray. Every time I feel the spirit moving in my heart, I will pray." My siblings, brothers, sisters, we've got to go to the mountain. We've been dwelling in a valley too long, playing too many games with one another and with God's creation. It is time to go to the mountain. If nothing else will, 9/11 in our memories and the realities should. If nothing else will, January the 6th, should. If nothing else will, the reality that even climate deniers can no longer deny should. We got to go to the mountain. I know you've got your mask on and you can't get too close

to your neighbor, but go on and turn to him and just say, we got to go to the mountain, just go and turn tell them. We got to go to the mountain.

Some years ago when I was a young bishop and it was actually almost 19 years ago now, I flew with Bishop Robert Neil, who was the then Bishop of Colorado he's now retired. I flew with him. The two of us had been asked by then presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, who wrote that collect that we prayed a few moments ago. We had been asked by him to represent him in our church at the installation of the new Archbishop of Burundi in East Africa. We flew from New York to London, Now, London to Nairobi. In Nairobi, flying over Tanzania to Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi. In route while flying over Tanzania, Robert Neill tapped me on my shoulder. He was sitting behind me. He said, look out the window. When I looked out the window, parallel to the plane above the clouds was Mount Kilimanjaro. I got to tell you, the soul of my North Carolina grandma just bubbled up. I kept hearing the song, "Then sings my soul, My Savior God to thee. How great though art!" When I saw that mountain top and it's majesty. Where earth and heaven seem to meet, where time and eternity seem to intersect. What the Celtic tradition calls those 'thin places' where the reality of God, not just the idea, the reality of God slips through into the reality of daily life. That's what the mountain top is about.

Oh my friends we got to go to the mountain. Are you all with me this morning? I know we can't sing, but you can say Amen! We've got to go to the mountain top. Isaiah's words were carefully and poetically chosen, Come let us go to the mountain of the Lord. If you listen to it, there is an internal logic, there is a trajectory. Come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord. Why? That He may teach us His ways, that we may walk in His path. Then when we do that, then they shall beat their swords into plow shares, their spears into pruning hooks, then nation will not rise up against nation, then political party will not rise up against political party, then vaccinated and unvaccinated, will not be at war with each other, help me somebody. Then they would not rise up with war and animosity toward one another, then bigotry would be history, then poverty would be history, then the valleys will be exalted in the mountains and hill made low, then we will learn to lay down our swords and shields. down by the river side. And study war no more. Come, let us go to the mountain that the God who the Bible says is love might teach us God's ways.

It is not an accident that as Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount, the Bible says he went up a mountain, sat down as a rabbi did in those days, and began to teach. Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the compassionate, blessed are the merciful, blessed are those who hunger and thirst that God's righteous justice might prevail in all the world, blessed are those who will not cease from laboring for peace. Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you. It's as one of the great rabbi's said, this is the whole of the law in the prophets, "everything else is commentary." Congress do unto others as you would have them do unto you, help somebody! Wall Street do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Amen. This Anglican Communion, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs Buddhists, Republican, Democrat, Independent, do unto others as you would have them do unto you and we would lay down our swords and shields down by the river side. And study war no more. That's what Jesus said, "Love your enemies." It's all in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew Chapter 5, 6, and 7, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those despitefully use you, by this everyone will know that you're my disciples. Not that you've memorized the Nicene Creed as wonderful is that he is, I love the Nicene Creed, I didn't say I understand everything, all of it, but I love it. But that's not how the world is going to look at it. Not that the world's going to even know you're Christian, that you've got the prayer book memorized.

I love the prayer book, don't worry, I've love our liturgy. Bishop, don't worry I'm not going off script, I'm off script but I'm not going out of bounds, no. By this, Jesus says, "Everyone will know that you are my disciples." How is that Lord that you love one another? That you love with nota sentimental love, but a sacrificial love. A love that gives and does not count the cost. Love that seeks the good and the welfare and the well-being of others, as well as ourselves, by that the world will know that you are my disciples. Come let us go to the mountain of the Lord. On the night of September 11th, 2001, I had been a bishop for about a year, was the Bishop of North Carolina, and that night I was scheduled to go to St. Phillip's Church, Durham for a service of baptism and some confirmations. When the towers fell, and when our world stopped, I called director probably mid morning I guess, and said, "What do you think we should do? I know we need to have church, should we do the baptisms?" I got to tell you what was going on. I've been a priest a long time, Bishop Dietsche is a lot older than I'm, but I've been a priest a long time and I've baptized a lot of babies and so I had this image of, especially when you baptize the baby, they are so cute. You know they're going to fight you and you get used to it and everybody giggles when the baby fights with the priest a little bit.

I had that image of this cute moment, if you will, which is very tender. I had that in mind and I was thinking, should we be doing baptisms on this horrible night? We talked it through and finally decided, Oh no, we need to baptize this night ,like the night of the Passover. There may be blood and horror, this is the night when we must baptize. When I listened to the liturgy of baptism in the prayer book, do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept Him as your savior? Do you put your whole trust in His grace and love? Y'all here that, in His grace and love, do you promise to follow Him as your Savior and Lord? Do you believe in God the Father? Do you believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? Not that you understand God, not that you always agree with God, but will you just give him your heart? Will you continue in the Apostles teachings and fellowship, in the teachings of the New Testament stuff like this? Will you continue in that? Will you stay in that in the breaking of bread and in the prayers? Will you continue, will you proclaim not just by example, but by your words by word and example, the good news of God in Christ?

Will you seek and serve Christ, check this out, seek and serve Christ in all persons. Loving your neighbor. The neighbor you like and the neighbor you don't like, the neighbor you agree with and the neighbor you disagree with, the neighbor who looks like you and the neighbor doesn't look like you, the neighbor who's vaccinated and the neighbor who's unvaccinated, Can I get an amen now? Where you seek and serve Christ and all persons, no matter who they are, no matter their politics, no matter their religion, no matter their pedigree, no matter their social class, no matter their sexual orientation, gender identity, no matter who they are, will use see Christ in them, love them like your sibling? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people? We needed to baptize some folk that night. Come let us go to the mountain. We observe this solemn occasion in a perilous moment in our national life and history. The seeds of self-centeredness, the seeds of hatred will inevitably yield a bitter harvest. This day is testimony to that, and we cannot continue this way.

Yesterday former President Bush warned us. It is worth reading his words, "Our unreconciled racial history, our deep and dangerous divisions will prove injurious to this very democracy left unattended to." This is no time for neutrality or quietism. But it is not time for loudness and anger.' Just prior to the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln warned this very nation quoting the words of Jesus, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." But let us not luxuriate in despair. Hope is on the way. Jesus once said, "No one has greater love than this, but that they give up their life for their friends." Let us remember that on this day and the days that followed, firefighters and police officers, and first responders, and ordinary people sacrificed themselves sometimes their very lives for people they did not know. We have seen greater

love even in the nightmare of horror and death and hatred. We have seen a greater love. Let us not forget that there were people who stood by Muslim-Americans who were in danger of being attacked after that. Let us remember that a Sikh man was killed because somebody thought he was a Muslim, and many stood by the Sikh community after that. Let us not forget that many stood; it was Jewish neighbors at synagogue. Let us not forget that we joined hands and cared for each other. Let us not forget that even if it was just for one brief shining moment we loved each other. Let us not forget. Hope is on the way.

What we did then, we can, by God's grace, do again, and discover who we truly are. Yesterday at the ringing of the bell at St. Paul's Chapel, and I'm coming to a conclusion, don't worry, but we were gathered together in a beautiful, powerful place, and I know you have done that faithfully every year. We gathered together and then went back in the chapel afterward, and I made a point of going to see a painting that hangs there from 1785. It was commissioned by the vestry of Trinity Church. Probably is one of the earliest depictions of the Great Seal of the United States. You may remember from your history that Benjamin Franklin thought the national bird ought to be a turkey, I'm glad the eagle won out. I love turkey at Thanksgiving. But I looked at this, remarkable, I wanted to see it. You remember the Great Seal, most of them now have the eagle with arrows, and one talon, and olive branches in the other. Above the eagle or the bird, in Latin the words, E Pluribus Unum; from many, one. From many diverse people; one nation, one people. One nation, indivisible. One nation under God where there is liberty and justice not for some, but for all. That's a miracle. Last fall I did some research to find out the origin of the phrase E Pluribus Unum which is the motto of the United States. It comes from the writings of Cicero of the Roman Republic.

Cicero said this and I quote, "When each person loves the other as much as he loves himself, then E Pluribus Unum, from many, one, becomes possible." When we dare to love in the way that Jesus taught us, when we summon the courage to love each other in the spirit of the God who the Bible says is love, then America will be America, and then we shall be a shining city on a hill. We've got to come to the mountain, and when we do, to meet our God who is love, we will discover that our differences become insignificant. We will discover a deeper unity that is born of our humanity created at the hands of divinity. I saw it this past week. A commentator mentioned what happened the night of 9/11 when members of the Congress of the United States stood at the Capitol realizing that one of the planes had been targeted for them. The members of the House, the members of the Senate came out and stood on the steps and the leaders gave speeches. When the speeches were over the leaders left, but before they could leave, spontaneously, unscripted, they began to sing God bless America. "Land that I love. Stand beside her, and guide her with the light through the night from above. From the mountains to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam, God bless America. My home, sweet home." The members of Congress held hands and held each other. That's what happens on the mountain top. God bless America. My home, sweet home.

Amen.