

D. M. Littlepage  
Wednesday in IV Lent  
March 17, 2010  
St. Columba's Episcopal Church  
Isaiah 49: 8-15; Psalm 145:8-19

May Christ be with us!  
May Christ be before us!  
May Christ be in us,  
Christ be over all!

May Thy Grace, Lord,  
Always be ours,  
This day, O Lord, and forevermore. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

A few summers ago, I lived with my cousin and his family, which included two boys aged 5 and 9. I quickly learned that when the house got a little too quiet, I should go investigate. If I went upstairs and found the boys sitting very still and very quietly, they had definitely been up to something. It was as though they hoped that if they hid quietly in their rooms, no one would notice the mess left in the living room, evidence of yet another one of their romps that had gotten out of hand. It seems to me that we are often like that with God. Like my cousins, when we realize that we have messed up, we are inclined to run and hide. But this morning we are invited to a different response. We are invited to show ourselves.

If you remember back with me, on Ash Wednesday when we embarked on this lenten journey, we were invited to, among other things, a season of self-examination. It is quite likely that as we prayerfully examine our lives, we become increasingly aware of things about ourselves of which we are not proud---ashamed of even. We may become aware of the anger that we have been holding on to; we may become aware of the jealousy and resentment that has been distancing us from our families and friends; we may become aware of a cool indifference to the movement of God in ourselves and in our communities. We become aware of just how much we have not loved the LORD our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and how much we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. And so, we run and hide in the darkness, full of guilt and shame. The good news this morning is that we do not have to hide from God.

This morning the prophet says to us who are in darkness, "Show yourselves." Show yourselves. Admittedly, hiding in darkness is often much easier, and much more comfortable than showing ourselves because showing ourselves makes us vulnerable to judgement and rejection. But we can show our angry, jealous, resentful, indifferent selves to the Lord, because "the LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The LORD is good to all and his compassion is over all that he has made." God invites us to show ourselves not so that we can be condemned, but so that God's compassion can transform us. It is true that God's steadfast love and compassion surrounds us even when we flee from God's presence and hide in the darkness, but when we step out of our hiding places and show ourselves to God, we

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<sup>1</sup> From "A Prayer for the Faithful" attributed to St. Patrick

are more fully able to live into God's loving mercy and to let God's compassion "uphold all those who fall and lift up those who are bowed down." We are more fully able to join our voices in the hymn of praise: "Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones." Amen.