

Readings for Thursday, March 5, 2026

John and Charles Wesley – *Priests, 1791, 1788*

Psalm 98

- 1 Sing to the LORD a new song, *
for he has done marvelous things.
- 2 With his right hand and his holy arm *
has he won for himself the victory.
- 3 The LORD has made known his victory; *
his righteousness has he openly shown in
the sight of the nations.
- 4 He remembers his mercy and faithfulness to
the house of Israel, *
and all the ends of the earth have seen the
victory of our God.
- 5 Shout with joy to the LORD, all you lands; *
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.
- 6 Sing to the LORD with the harp, *
with the harp and the voice of song.
- 7 With trumpets and the sound of the horn *
shout with joy before the King, the LORD.
- 8 Let the sea make a noise and all that is in it, *
the lands and those who dwell therein.
- 9 Let the rivers clap their hands, *
and let the hills ring out with joy before the LORD,
when he comes to judge the earth.
- 10 In righteousness shall he judge the world *
and the peoples with equity.

Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.’

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: ‘Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: ‘Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’

Luke 9:1-6

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.’ They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

Collect:

Lord God, you inspired your servants John and Charles Wesley with burning zeal for the sanctification of souls and endowed them with eloquence in speech and song: Kindle such fervor in your church, we entreat you, that those whose faith has cooled may be warmed, and those who have not known Christ may turn to him and be saved; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

John and Charles Wesley

Priests, 1791, 1788

John was the fifteenth, and Charles the eighteenth, child of Samuel Wesley, Rector of Epworth, Lincolnshire, and his wife, Susannah. John was born on June 17, 1703, and Charles on December 18, 1707. Of the nineteen Wesley siblings, only ten lived to maturity. Under their mother's tutelage, all of them were schooled each day in six-hour sessions, always begun and concluded with the singing of psalms.

Their theological writings and sermons are still widely appreciated, but it is through their hymns—especially those of Charles, who wrote over six thousand of them—that their religious experience, and their Christian faith and life, continue to touch the hearts of many.

Both Wesleys were educated at Christ Church, Oxford, John later being elected a fellow of Lincoln College, where they gathered a few friends to join a “Holy Club” in strict adherence to the worship and discipline of the Prayer Book, and were thus given the name “Methodists.” John was ordained in 1728 and Charles in 1735. Both were profoundly attached to the doctrine and worship of the Church of England, although they were deeply moved by and critical of the church's neglect of the poor. Their affection for the Church of England remained despite abusive opposition to their cause and methods.

The two brothers went together to Georgia in 1735, John as a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and Charles as secretary to James Oglethorpe, the Governor. The mission was a disaster, and both brothers returned to England, dejected and disappointed. Shortly after their return home, however, they each experienced an inner conversion. On May 21, 1738—Pentecost— Charles “felt the Spirit of God striving with his spirit ‘till by degrees He chased away the darkness of unbelief.” Three days later, at a meeting on May 24 in Aldersgate Street in London with a group of Moravians, during a reading of Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans, John recorded, “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

So the revival was born. The two brothers placed a strong emphasis on preaching, and appointed lay people, both men and women, as preachers and evangelists to work together with the clergy in proclaiming the gospel.

The formal separation of the Methodists from the Church of England occurred only after the deaths of the two brothers in London— Charles on March 29, 1788, and John on March 2, 1791. In recent decades there has been increased cooperation and growth in agreement between Anglicans and Methodists, and growing appreciation for our common heritage.