

Trinity 14

(There are three choices of propers for each office this week). Two distinct sermons are provided for Morning Prayer A, one to stress each lesson. More are to be written for the other readings.

Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Micah 6:1-8

Second Lesson: Phil 4:4-13

Homily 1 (on the OT Lesson)

*"O my people, what have I done unto thee,
or wherein have I wearied thee?
Testify against me."*

Nearly half a year ago, in parishes where the traditional Good Friday rites are used in full, these words from the Prophet Malachi were heard in church, perhaps solemnly sung to one of several glorious settings.

Whoever compiled the ancient liturgy heard the Prophet's call:

"Hear ye now what the LORD saith;

*Arise, contend thou before the mountains,
and let the hills hear thy voice.*

*Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy,
and ye strong foundations of the earth:
for the LORD hath a controversy with his people,
and he will plead with Israel."*

The writer heard, listened carefully, and remembered the Cross. He took these words as coming from the Cross to a fallen and much beloved humanity, and expanded them to remind us of the mercies God has shown to us, and of our own wretched response to them:

*Because I brought thee forth from the land of Egypt:
thou hast prepared a Cross for thy Saviour.*

*Because I led thee through the desert forty years,
and fed thee with manna,
and brought thee into a land exceeding good:
thou hast prepared a Cross for thy Saviour.*

*What more could I have done unto thee
that I have not done?
I indeed did plant thee, O my vineyard,
with exceeding fair fruit:
and thou art become very bitter unto me:*

*for vinegar, mixed with gall,
thou gavest me when thirsty:
and hast pierced with a spear the side of thy Saviour.*

*I led thee forth out of Egypt,
drowning Pharaoh in the Red Sea:
and thou hast delivered me up unto the chief priests.*

*I did open the sea before thee:
and thou hast opened my side with a spear.*

*I did go before thee in the pillar of cloud:
and thou hast led me
into the judgement-hall of Pilate.*

*I did feed thee with manna in the desert:
and thou hast stricken me
with blows and scourges.*

*I did give thee to drink the water of life from the
rock:
and thou hast given me to drink but gall and vinegar.*

*I did smite the kings of the Canaanites for thy sake:
and thou hast smitten my head with a reed.*

*I did give thee a royal sceptre:
and thou hast given unto my head*

a crown of thorns.

*I did raise thee on high with great power:
and thou hast hanged me upon the gibbet of the
Cross.*

*O my people, what have I done unto thee,
or wherein have I wearied thee?
Testify against me."*

It is fitting, when we look upon the Cross,
that we remember why He hung there,.
why He suffered there,
why He died there.
and why he eternally presents that Sacrifice
before His Father's heavenly throne,
and why it is that we need, week after week,
to eat and drink of that same Sacrifice.

We are sinners.

We continually offend the holiness of God,
We constantly refuse the goodness He has offered
us,
and yet,

*"God so loved the world that He gave ...
... gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in him
should not perish ...*

*...not perish,
but have everlasting life,"*

Yes, the Cross is reproach.
Every remembrance of it should remind us
of our sins and our disobedience,
of the essential wickedness that we seem
unable to leave behind,
of the lifelong struggle we face
as we so failingly try to follow Him.
But that same Cross is our hope and our glory.

He reproaches us, but not in anger,
rather with a warm and loving invitation,
*"Come unto me,
all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest."*

It is right that we remember our sins,
that we lament the evils
that we ourselves have brought into the world,
and that the remembrance of them should spur us
toward a better service to our Lord and King,
but in that same Cross we have remembrance.
What we have brought to Him for forgiveness
is forgiven,
has been carried as far from us
as the East is from the West.

Though He continues to reproach us,
and to call us to holiness,
yet He speaks of love and forgiveness,
of acceptance and everlasting life.
In that Cross (and only in that Cross)
we can do as St. Paul directs:

*"Rejoice in the Lord always:
and again I say, Rejoice. ...
And the peace of God,
which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds
through Christ Jesus."*

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesu Christ, who from the bosom of the
Father in heaven didst come down to earth, and shed
thy precious Blood for the remission of all our sins:
we humbly beseech thee; that in the day of
judgement we may be found worthy to stand at thy
right hand and hear thy voice: Come, ye blessed
ones. Who livest and reignest with the Father and
the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.
Amen.

Homily 2 (on the NT Lesson)

*"... whatsoever things are true,
 whatsoever things are honest,
 whatsoever things are just,
 whatsoever things are pure,
 whatsoever things are lovely,
 whatsoever things are of good report;
 if there be any virtue,
 and if there be any praise,
 think on these things."*

St. Paul lived in a world where,
 much as in our world,
 There was a great deal that was wrong.
 There was open and obvious immorality.
 Why, even the gods were depicted
 as engaging in those things
 of which we probably shouldn't even speak.
 There was a culture of cruelty.
 The most popular entertainment
 was the violent death of men in the arena.
 It was a culture of extreme inequality.
 The rich were very, very rich,
 and lived a life of wasteful luxury,
 while the poor had nothing but misery.
 It was a culture of oppression.
 The civilized world

was under the forced control
 of a powerful centralized Empire,
 and it did not matter what the citizens thought.
 Judea certainly wanted to be free,
 as did other subject nations.
 Execution was public and brutal,
 and the countryside was littered with crosses
 bearing "enemies of the state".
 Unwanted babies
 were merely left on the roadside to die,
 and it was illegal to rescue them.

There was a lot to complain about.
 There was a lot that a Christian could not accept,
 a lot that a Christian would earnestly desire to
 change.
 St. Paul certainly does recognize some of these
 things.
 He leaves no doubt at all of proper Christian
 standards.
 There is no support or even toleration for these evils
 - anywhere in his writings.
 St. Paul stands in total opposition to evil,
 to all evil,
 including the evil enthroned
 in the hearts of Christians.

However,

even though we often hear it said,
 even though it has often been acted upon,
 it is not true
 that the main purpose of Christianity
 is to oppose evil.

Yes, the wrath of God has been revealed.
 His hot displeasure has been known and felt,
 but, friends, remember his ultimate answer.
 Remember the Cross.

Remember the love for disgusting sinners
 that led the Savior there to die,
 so that they could be lifted out of the evil..

Remember His invitation.

Remember His great commission.

The main purpose of Christianity
 is not that it should oppose evil,
 but that it should seek the good.

Its mission is to present evil mankind
 with God's desire that they become good,
 that they return
 to the image in which he made them.

St. Paul knew very well indeed
 how much real evil resides in this world,
 but he knew also that we become the very thing
 on which our attention is fixed.

If our concentration is upon what is wrong,
 our minds become darkened with that evil,

our hearts become filled with anger and worry,
 and our actions tend toward force and punishment.
 We separate our own selves from God's love,
 and we build walls to prevent others
 from coming to see and know that love.

Thus it is that St. Paul instructs us
 (to repeat our text:)

*"... whatsoever things are true,
 whatsoever things are honest,
 whatsoever things are just,
 whatsoever things are pure,
 whatsoever things are lovely,
 whatsoever things are of good report;
 if there be any virtue,
 and if there be any praise,
 think on these things."*

Where there is evil, think on the good.
 Pray and work that the good come to pass.
 Where there is evil, think on the Lord,
 for He is good, the only good,
 and in him is no evil at all.
 Pray for your enemies, that they be friends.
 Pray for sinners, that they find purity.
 In the midst of ugliness, pray for beauty.
 Seek God.

Draw near to the cross
whereon your sins have been nailed.
Find holiness for your own lives,
and let the beauty of holiness be seen.
Instead of your anger at what is wrong,
strive to lead sinners to the throne of God,
and there peace and beauty are to be found.

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who saidst unto thine Apostles,
peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you;
Regard not our sins, but the faith of thy Church; and
grant to it that peace and unity which is according to
thy will, who livest and reignest with the Father and
the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

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Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: 1 Chron 29:10-17

Second Lesson: Luke 17:5-10

Homily to be written

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Morning Prayer C

First Lesson: Gen 45:1-15, 25-28

Second Lesson: Heb 13:1-21

Homily to be written

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Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: Jer 7:1-11

Second Lesson: Luke 13:18-30

Homily to be written

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Evening Prayer B

First Lesson: Deut 8:1-14, 17-20

Second Lesson: Luke 17:11-19

Homily to be written

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Evening Prayer C

First Lesson: 1 Kings 3:4-15

Second Lesson: Acts 17:16-34

Homily to be written