

Trinity 16

(There are three choices of propers for each office this week) A Homily is provided for Morning Prayer A, and one for Evening Prayer A . Others are to be written.

Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Isa 12

Second Lesson: John 11:21-44

Homily

The Gospel of salvation is a story of marvelous and unexpected reversal. The earliest Christians had a reputation for just that, as we hear in the words of their opponents

"These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6)

A careful reading of the parables of Our Lord, will reveal the sudden and surprising twists, the punch lines, if you will, that bring the unexpected point home and many of the incidents of His ministry have the same kind of surprise ending, as in today's reading from St. John.

Long before His day we find the same thing in a wonderful song of praise from the Prophet Isaiah.

*"I will praise thee,
though thou wast angry with me,"*

he sings..

The story starts with an open admission that things were not always good between the singer and the Lord.

God was angry. And why?

God is not angry unjustly.

He is angry when anger is deserved, and the singer had offended Him, had, in other words, sinned.

God was angry, and justly angry, but the singer praises Him. Why? because, unaccountably, things changed.

The singer had not suddenly undone all the veil he had done. That was not possible. He had not suddenly become someone else. He still deserved God's anger, but ...

*"... though thou wast angry with me,
thine anger is turned away,
and thou comfortedst me. "*

Whoa!

That wasn't expected,
and shouldn't have been expected,
but God is merciful.

*"So God loved the world,
that he gave his only-begotten Son,
to the end that all that believe in him
should not perish,
but have everlasting life."*

We've come to where we recite this verse
almost mechanically,
as if it were only to be expected,
but we should catch our breath
in positive amazement every time we hear it.
It's just not "natural".
Criminals (which is what we are before God)
do not deserve such a gift,
but God has chosen to give, and give, and give.

And so we hear the familiar story.
A man got sick and died.
That happens all the time.
They buried him.

That's what you do.

Jesus came on the scene, but he was dead already.
Hope was gone. All logic said so.
Dead people are dead,
Not only that, but four days in mideastern heat
is quite sufficient for Martha's words to be true:

*"Lord, by this time he stinketh:
for he hath been dead four days. "*

Hopeless?

All over?

It certainly seemed that way.

But the ending is different.

Jesus called him out of the tomb.

The dead man got up, and was alive again.

Likewise, a bit later,

Jesus Himself was dead.

They buried Him.

Hopeless?

All over?

It certainly seemed that way.

But the ending is different.

"He is not here! He is risen!

Because He lives we shall live also!"

ALLELUIA!

Are we sinners?

"All have sinned

and come short of the glory of God"

Do we deserve to be punished?

"The wages of sin is death ..."

Is that what we receive?

*"... but the gift of God is eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Our own life in him comes with a surprise ending.

We don't get what we deserve.

THANK GOD!

He wants us. He calls us. He holds us.

Do we know people who seem unworthy
of our love and respect?

Of course we do.

Do we think they deserve scorn and punishment?

Are we right?

Well, yes, and yes.

and we deserve the same.

But does God wish to leave them
under condemnation?

Or is He calling them as He called us?

Do we love them as he loves them?

Do we reach out to them as He does?

Let us pray.

O God, who willest that all men should be saved,
and come to the knowledge of the truth: send us
forth, we beseech thee, as labourers into thy harvest,
and enable us to speak the word with all boldness;
that thy word may run and be glorified, and that all
mankind may know thee, the one true God, and him
whom thou hast sent, even Jesus Christ thy Son our
Lord. Amen.

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Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: Jer 32:36-42

Second Lesson: Rom 11:25-36

Homily to be written

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Morning Prayer C

First Lesson: Exod 3:1-15

Second Lesson: 1 Pet 5:1-11

Homily to be written

see also the sermon by Canon Hollister
under this date
in the Sermons by Other Authors

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Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: Ezek 33:1-9

Second Lesson: Matt 24:37-51

Homily

Both Bible readings today make it very clear that, as the people of God, we have been left with a serious responsibility; and, as Our Lord said,

*“Blessed is that servant,
whom his lord when he cometh
shall find so doing.”*

and, as it is said in both lessons, there are consequences if such a duty is neglected.

What we are given in these passages is not merely good advice, but a direct and unmistakable order to those who would call themselves Christians. So it would seem like a good thing for us to examine just what it is that Our Lord has called on us to do.

Jesus gives us the example of Noah
He lived in a world full of violence,
a world where people were interested in
“doing their own thing”
and weren’t interested in the will of God.
Sound familiar?

Is our time different from that?
He said such a day was coming,
and such days, in fact, are always here.
Just look around you.
Listen to the news.
Listen to your neighbors.
Hear what they say, and watch what they do.
The nations strive and wars rage.

People fight and mistreat each other.
Marriages fail and spouses cheat on each other.
Men and women, men and men,
women and women
do what should not be done outside marriage,
and honesty is made to seem old-fashioned
and silly.

Can this be much different from Noah’s day?
Genesis describes a huge flood,
predicted, but unexpected.
People had been warned, but had not listened,
and were caught by surprise.

This time is like that time,
 and, though we are not warned of a flood,
 we are told that Our Lord will return,
 and judgment will occur.
 We said we believe that just moments ago,
 when we recited the Creed.
 He will come in glory and we will be judged.

This isn't a "Left Behind" sermon.
 There's no necessity to believe all the details
 of the popular series of novels
 or of the hysterical teaching of so many.
 It's not necessary to be telling tales
 of driverless cars and pilotless planes,
 but these are, perhaps, useful symbols
 of a sudden end that will come to each of us,
 whether in a final return of Our Lord,
 or at our own solitary death.
 There certainly will be a time,
 perhaps entirely unexpected,
 when we shall have ended this mortal life, and
 shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

In the Litany we pray this:

*"...and from sudden death,
 Good Lord, deliver us."*

Most of us would prefer a quick death
 to a lingering and painful one,
 so what do we mean by that?
 Perhaps we are asking that we have opportunity
 to be ready to meet the Lord,
 which comes by awareness that we shall meet Him.
 and by a life of preparing to meet Him,
 in other words, that when that day comes,
 we will be ready.

We are told to love our neighbors as ourselves.
 Wouldn't that seem to mean a real desire
 that they have as good a chance of being ready,
 as we want for ourselves?
 If we love our neighbor, and even our enemy,
 as Our Lord has commanded us,
 wouldn't we do everything in our power
 to help bring them to the same blessed end
 that we seek?

Thus it is
 that Our Lord commanded us to
 go into all nations,
 to teach what He has commanded,
 and to make disciples.

Not, indeed to force people to convert,
 not even necessarily to convince them,

but certainly to give them the chance to know.
 Noah, you see, didn't convince anyone
 beyond the eight members of his family.
 even though he preached, taught, and warned,
 for decade after decade.

But he had done his part.
 and they had their chance.

The Prophet Ezekiel is very clear.
 We have a message.
 It is our job to share that message.
 It is a message those around us need to hear.
 If we've shared it with them,
 told people what it means that we are Christians,
 that we are Catholic Christians, Anglicans,
 told them what it means that we meet the Lord
 in Word and Sacraments,
 that we find forgiveness of our sins,
 strength to live, and hope for eternity --
 If we've shared that,
 then our neighbors have access to what we have,
 and the decision is now theirs.
 If we have not shared this good news,
 Our Lord will indeed hold us responsible,
 because we will not have loved them
 as we have loved ourselves.

His yoke is easy.
 His burden is light.
 We don't need to be scholars or theologians.
 We don't need to be anything special.
 We have a precious treasure, and we have the ability
 to share it.

Let us pray.

O Almighty God, look mercifully upon the world
 which thou has redeemed by the blood of thy dear
 Son, and incline all of our hearts to share the Gospel
 thou hast given us. Through the same thy Son Jesus
 Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Evening Prayer B

First Lesson: 1 Kings 17:8-9, 17-24

Second Lesson: Luke 7:11-17

Homily to be written

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Evening Prayer C

First Lesson: 1 Kings 12:1-20

Second Lesson: Acts 19:21-41

Homily to be written