

Trinity 17

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

Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Jer 13:15-21

Second Lesson: Mark 10:35-45

Homily

These are intimidating lessons from Scripture. They speak primarily to those in authority in the Church, and bear a powerful theme of leadership and responsibility, but this message is also for all of us, for every Christian has a calling, and every calling comes with both gifts and responsibilities, and every gift and every responsibility requires of us an attitude, one that doesn't come naturally.

A few years ago a prominent comedian was known for an oft-repeated line: "I don't get no respect."

Most of us relate well to that complaint. That may be why he became so popular. We certainly see it this morning in St. Mark. James and John, the sons of Zebedee came up to Our Lord. We learn in the other account, in St. Matthew, that it was at their mother's urging. She was proud of her boys, and rightly so.

They were successful fishermen, and they had left their business to serve God. They seem to have been personable young men of considerable strength of character. It seemed only right that they should be the two most honored assistants in the coming Kingdom, and sit on the Lord's right and left. Were they entitled to respect they weren't getting? Perhaps in human eyes they were, probably in their own eyes, certainly in their mother's eyes -- but in God's eyes? To Jesus, power does not demand respect. Leadership does not demand respect. Position does not demand respect.

Even martyrdom does not demand respect.
 To be respected is not, for him,
 a worthy objective at all,
 but servanthood:

*"... even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto,
 but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

That is what He came into the world for,
 and that is what He meant when he said,
 "Follow me".

Listen to these extremely hard words
 from Jeremiah:

*Hear ye, and give ear;
be not proud:
 for the LORD hath spoken.
 Give glory to the LORD your God,
 before he cause darkness,
 and before your feet stumble
 upon the dark mountains,
 and, while ye look for light,
 he turn it into the shadow of death,
 and make it gross darkness. "*
"But if ye will not hear it,

*my soul shall weep in secret places **for your pride;**
 and mine eye shall weep sore,
 and run down with tears,
 because the LORD's flock
 is carried away captive. "*

We are put here to become servants.
 We are called to be servants.
 We will be judged as servants.

Whether bishops, parish clergy,
 officials of any sort,
 or merely as the quietest, least seen, witnesses,
 our Job is to serve both God and those around us,
 be they ever so unappealing and "unworthy".

In Matthew 25 Our Lord depicts Himself
 as judging us on this basis.
 Did we see Him and serve Him
 in the ones who needed His touch?
"In the least of these His brethren?"

In the words of the Prophet,
 we can expect to Hear His voice:

*"... where is the flock that was given thee,
 thy beautiful flock? "*

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, thou who didst come into our midst as a
servant,
deliver us from the chains of our pride.
fill us with the spirit of servanthood,
grant that we be faithful to our calling
to serve thee in those around us,
and to lead thy flock into thy pastures
where thou livest and reignest with the Father and
the Holy Spirit,
one God unto ages of everlasting ages. Amen.

Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: Ecclesiasticus 8:1-9

Second Lesson: 2 Tim 2:19-26

Homily to be written

Trinity 17

Morning Prayer C

First Lesson: Exod 5:1-9, 19-6:1

Second Lesson: Heb 3

Homily to be written

Trinity 17

Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: Mal 2:1-10

Second Lesson: Luke 13:10-17

Homily

The Prophet Malachi and Our Lord Himself had some harsh things to say, at different times and in different places, to some powerful and respected people. These are not polite and respectful sayings that we heard today, are they?

And who were these powerful and respected people? Malachi spoke to the priests, the descendants of Levi, who had been chosen by God to offer sacrifice, to lead worship, and to teach the Law to the people. Jesus spoke to the ruler of the synagogue, and also, we can assume, to the other leaders of the house of prayer and study. These were the experts in the Scripture, the ones Jesus said sat “in Moses’ seat”. In both cases it was the respected religious leaders, the clergy, we might now say, the ones one was supposed to listen to,

whose word should ordinarily be obeyed. They knew the Scriptures. They quoted the Scriptures. They interpreted the Scriptures. And that was what they were supposed to do.

For the most part, they seem to have done it fairly well. Jesus, after all, told his followers to hear them, but ...

There was a problem in what they did with the truth they had. In their hands the truth became a weapon, a tool for excluding those of whom they did not approve, for judging and battering down those whom they judged to be sinners, for dividing men from men, and for labeling themselves better than others.

But God is love. He desireth not the death of a sinner, but that all men should live. He came not to confine His people in a crowded and crabbed little corner, but to give life, and to give it more abundantly.

He came not to condemn sinners,
but to call them to repentance,
to invite them to sit with Him
at a heavenly banquet..

But they took this precious gift of truth
and used it as a club
to beat down those who did not conform,
to exclude them and declare them unclean, and even
rejoiced that the wicked (so they thought)
could not be saved.

And why do we have this message?
What instruction does it contain
for those of us who believe we have truth,
who have sometimes left much behind
for the sake of that truth?

Is the Lord Christ saying something in these
passages
that we need to hear?

Are we perhaps somewhat less than perfect
in our handling of the words of life?

Is there perhaps truth
in the criticism we hear from outside?

Let's ask ourselves a big question:

What is it that we show most clearly about ourselves
to those around us?

What are we loudest about in public?

Are we known by the beauties of what we believe?
Do the truths of the Creeds come alive
to those who watch and hear us?

Is it an invitation to the wonders of salvation,
and to a truly abundant life

that they perceive in our words and actions?

Do we convey our love for the Lord Jesus,
and His love for us, and for them?

Do we raise up a hunger for what God can do
in the Sacraments He has given us?

Or does it appear that what is most important
is the things that we oppose?

Yes, it is well known that

we are against the ordination of women,
that we condemn sex outside of marriage,

that we oppose so-called "gay marriage",
that we are fiercely opposed to abortion,

that we dislike much of what is known as
'contemporary' worship style,

and most of modern 'liberal' theology.

Yes, we do oppose these things, and should.

But is that who we really are?

Is that what we present ourselves to be?

As an angry and oppositional group of people

that just won't be satisfied?
Is that the message we have to offer the world?

Sometimes it appears that way.
Sometimes even we ourselves
seem to see it that way.
But that is no different from the Pharisees,
from the ruler of that synagogue,
from those narrow-minded priests,
and what sinner is going to be drawn by that?

We have a treasure.
We have a message.
We have a promise and an invitation.
How beautiful on the mountaintops are the feet
of them that bring good news, said Isaiah..
but how ugly is a message of condemnation
without Good News.

Let us pray.

Open our mouths, O Lord,
to speak the wonders of thy grace.
Help us to show sinners thy promise.
Give us the words of peace and invitation,
and help us so to live that they love be shown.
Deliver us, heavenly Father,
from bitterness and anger,

that our opposition to what is wrong
may become an invitation to what is right,
and beautiful, and saving,
the Cross of thy dear Son Jesus Christ,
in whose Name we pray. Amen.

Trinity 17

Evening Prayer B

First Lesson: Ecclesiasticus 10:7-18

Second Lesson: Luke 14:1-11

Homily to be written

Trinity 17

Evening Prayer C

First Lesson: 1 Kings 18:1-2, 17-39

Second Lesson: Acts 20:17-38

Homily to be written