

Trinity 19

Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Job 24:1-17

Second Lesson: Titus 2

Homily

*"But speak thou the things
which become sound doctrine: "*

Thus begins our New Testament reading
from St. Paul's letter to St. Titus.

He's advising this young pastor what to teach,
and it's clear in this passage that good doctrine
by itself is not sufficient.

He isn't using the word "become"
in the sense of "change into",
but in the older meaning of the word,
the one we use when we say,
"that dress is very becoming",
which, of course, means that it looks good on you,
that it's fitting for you, even that it ornaments you.

Sound doctrine is something that we have been
fighting for.

Many of us have left beloved churches because of it.
We can become very passionate about

"getting it right",
and all that is important,
but is proper doctrine and the right form of words
all that there is to Christianity?
God forbid!
It makes a difference how we live, what we do,
and what kind of attitude we have.

St. Paul tells Titus
to teach the people what it is that is a fitting
ornament
for the sound doctrine they have been learning,
how we can look and act
in a fitting, a becoming way,
that shows
what this wonderful Gospel really is like.

The rest of the reading
can sound like a list of rules,
things to judge each other by,
but that's not what St. Paul was writing at all.
He's giving a description
of what people who know the Good News,
and have determined to live in a way that befits it,
will look like.
Old men, old women, young women, young men,
servants and masters, who desire to live the Gospel
are being described here, and each of us

is given a standard to judge ourselves by.
 The specifics of this lesson ought to be studied
 often by every Christian,
 and every Christian should ask himself,
 "How am I doing, what can I improve?"

And why should we be examining ourselves
 this way?

well, the reading from Job
 talks about the evil things
 that religious people often do,
 the selfishness they often show ...
 (Realistically I should have said,
 "the selfishness that **we** often show") ...
 and how they (or we) often live as though
 God cannot see us;
 and points out the reality that He can and does,
 and of those that live that way, says:

*"... the morning is to them even as
 the shadow of death:
 if one know them,
 they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.*

Yes, if we sin, we should fear,
 but that doesn't need to be
 our main motivation for living right.
 You see, we know something,

as the chief part of that doctrine
 we should be ornamenting:
 that God loves us, and sent His Son to save us,
 and has given us such a great hope,
 that if we understand it,
 we will want to live by it.
 St. Paul goes on:

*"... Teaching us that,
 denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,
 we should live soberly, righteously, and godly,
 in this present world;
 Looking for that blessed hope,
 and the glorious appearing
 of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
 Who gave himself for us, ..."*

And why did He give Himself for us?
 St. Paul continues:

*"... that he might redeem us from all iniquity,
 and purify unto himself a peculiar people,
 zealous of good works."*

Yes, He does want us to be with Him in heaven,
 but He wants us to be the expression,
 the picture, if you will,
 of what that Heaven is like.

Is that what people see when they look at us?
As St. Paul says:

*"These things speak, and exhort,
and rebuke with all authority.
Let no man despise thee."*

If we teach one thing and live another,
what kind of respect will we get?
What kind of respect will the Gospel get?
What kind of respect will our church get?
What kind of respect will God get?

Let us pray.

Fill us, Lord, with the spirit of holiness.
Stir up in us the same love
that was displayed on the Cross.
Conform our thoughts and attitudes
to the mind of Christ.
Make us ornaments to the truth thou hast given us.
Through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Trinity 19

Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: Jer 30:12-22

Second Lesson: John 5:1-16

Homily to be written

Trinity 19

Morning Prayer C

First Lesson: Exod 19:1-7, 16-19, 20:1-3

Second Lesson: Rom 3:1-2, 19-31

Homily to be written

Trinity 19

Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: Jer 5:7-19

Second Lesson: 2 Cor 13

Homily

Isaiah had a message for the people of God.
It was a stark and unpleasant message.
These were the people whom God had called,
whom he had led and protected,
for whom He had done many miracles.
These were His beloved,
described by Him as His bride.
And yet the message was harsh and angry.
Why?

Let's take a closer look.

*"How shall I pardon thee for this?
thy children have forsaken me,
and sworn by them that are no gods:
when I had fed them to the full,
they then committed adultery, ..."*

Had they actually been committing such acts?

Perhaps. Men were no better then than now.
But was that what it was really all about,
or is there something deeper?
Well, this label is often used in Scripture
for something God regards as even worse:
the seeking after false gods,
the worship of other gods before him -
in direct violation of the very first Commandment.
God considers desertion of his worship
and the worship of others in the same way
that he considers desertion of the marriage bed
for the arms of another.

Literal idolatry, the worship of false gods,
was an ongoing temptation for Judah and Israel.
It was the temptation
to be like the neighboring peoples,
to do as they did, to fit in.
And so they put these other gods
ahead of the God that claimed them as bride.

*"For the house of Israel and the house of Judah
have dealt very treacherously against me,
saith the LORD.
They have belied the LORD, and said, It is not he;
neither shall evil come upon us;
neither shall we see sword nor famine:"*

Not only did they desert the Lord,
but they assumed that He didn't care,
but He did.

*"Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD:
and shall not my soul be avenged
on such a nation as this?
Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy;"*

Much of the reading concerned the terrible fate
that awaited the people, that surely came --
They were invaded, and taken off into captivity.
It was a horrible and painful situation,
but even so, God is faithful to His bride,
and did not abandon her.

*"Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD,
I will not make a full end with you.
And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say,
Wherefore
doeth the LORD our God all these things unto us?
then shalt thou answer them,
Like as ye have forsaken me,
and served strange gods in your land,
so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not
your's.*

But have you noticed that there are still Jews today?
Have you noticed that they are once again in Israel?
We don't need to have any particular political agenda
or any particular view of prophecy
to notice that He indeed did not make a full end.

So also we hear St. Paul writing to Corinth.
This was God's church,
and it was forever messing up
and going in directions God did not approve.
The Apostle had strong words for them,
insisting that they needed
to conform themselves with God's will,
but he closed this way:

*"Finally, brethren, farewell.
Be perfect, be of good comfort,
be of one mind, live in peace;
and the God of love and peace shall be with you.
Greet one another with an holy kiss.
All the saints salute you.
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Ghost,
be with you all. Amen.*

We're tempted to apply these words
to the church from which many of us came.
That church has most certainly
embraced actions and ideas that God condemns.
Pray for them.
They have put themselves in dire straits,
and only repentance will bring them back to grace.

But the condemnation of others is never
the purpose for which we have the Scriptures.
We are intended to examine
our own relationship with our God,
with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
who is the subject of all Scripture.
Are we loving Him with all our heart,
with all our mind and soul and strength?
Are we living only by His standards,
or are we bending
to the ways of the world around us?

In one way or another, we are bending.
It is a fact of life that we are failing God,
each and every one of us as individuals,
and the church as a body.
He calls us, daily,
to recognize that and to repent,
to turn around,
and to return to His ways.

Let us pray.
Most merciful God, who art of purer eyes than to
behold iniquity, and hast promised forgiveness to all
those who confess and forsake their sins; We come
before thee in an humble sense of our own
unworthiness, acknowledging our manifold
transgressions of thy righteous laws. But, O
gracious Father, who desirest not the death of a
sinner, look upon us, we beseech thee, in mercy, and
forgive us all our transgressions. Make us deeply
sensible of the great evil of them and work in us an
hearty contrition; that we may obtain forgiveness at
thy hands, who art ever ready to receive humble and
penitent sinners; for the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ,
our only Savior and Redeemer. Amen.

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Evening Prayer B

First Lesson: Wisdom 12:12-19

Second Lesson: Matt 9:1-8

Homily to be written

Trinity 19

Evening Prayer C

First Lesson: 1 Kings 21:1-22

Second Lesson: Acts 22:24-23:11

Homily to be written