

Trinity 21

Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Isa 59:15b-21

Second Lesson: 2 Cor 10:1-7, 17-18

Homily

There is a war going on.

This is not a message about foreign affairs, but it is about the very real situation in which we, as Christians, find ourselves.

There is a war going on, and we find ourselves in the middle of it.

It's not the type of war that is fought with guns and bombs, nor is it fought with propaganda or demonstrations or pressure groups. This war is neither military nor political, though it affects both realms, but make no mistake: it is war.

We heard St. Paul:

"... though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,

but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) "

Have you not noticed that this world is no friend to the Gospel of Christ? In politics, in foreign affairs, in the conduct of public figures, in entertainment, in what is taught in schools, in the assumptions held by almost everyone, including the basic assumptions of most Christians, and in the daily actions and conversations of pretty nearly everyone, including most of us a good part of the time, both the standards of God's moral law, and the Gospel standard of mercy are consistently trampled upon.

And so, as our reading from Isaiah began:

"... the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. "

God is not pleased that man opposes His Word. God is not pleased when His own called and chosen people accept the ways and the thought patterns of a fallen world -- when there is no judgment.

The first of all the commandments is this:
"Thou shalt have none other gods but me."
 The "first and great commandment is this:
*"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
 with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,
 and with all thy mind."*

This world
 accepts any authority other than that of God,
 whether it be government, ideology, patriotism,
 or comfort, material gain, or pleasure,
 or, as it all too often is,
 the tyranny of what 'everyone' does or says
 or thinks.
 These are other gods.
 These are diversions of our love,
 our hearts, souls, and minds,
 from loving God Himself.

There is a war going on.
 Satan and his legion of fallen angels
 are steadfast in their opposition to God's truth.
 Their lies are to be heard and seen in all the world,
 even, sad to say, in the churches.
 The powers of evil rejoice
 in every acceptance of their lies,
 whether by those we see as evil,

or by those we applaud;
 and they accept it as worship of themselves
 as gods.

There is a war going on,
 and we have a part in it.
 As St. Paul says:

*"Casting down imaginations,
 and every high thing that exalteth itself
 against the knowledge of God,
 and bringing into captivity every thought
 to the obedience of Christ;*

Notice that it begins in ourselves.
 We, all of us, are battlefields.
 We are constantly tempted by unholy imaginings,
 by pride and self-pleasing,
 by the spirit of that old song
 "I had to do it MY way."
 It is our own thoughts that need to be brought
 into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

*"And having in a readiness
 to revenge all disobedience,
 when your obedience is fulfilled."*

Have you noticed the subtle echo

of Our Lord's words in St. John, chapter 8?

"Let him that is without sin cast the first stone."

Yes, we are God's instruments in this world.
 Yes, we are called to bring His Word
 and to call sinners to repentance, to change.
 But the first repentance, the first change,
 the first renewal of obedience must be within us,
 and when this is so, as Isaiah said:

*"As for me, this is my covenant with them,
 saith the LORD;
 My spirit that is upon thee,
 and my words which I have put in thy mouth,
 shall not depart out of thy mouth,
 nor out of the mouth of thy seed,
 nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed,
 saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever."*

Let us pray.

O God, merciful Father, who despiseth not the
 sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as
 are sorrowful; mercifully assist our prayers which we
 make before thee in all our troubles and adversities,
 whensoever they oppress us, from within or without;
 and graciously hear us, that those evils which the

craft and subtilty of the devil or man worketh
 against us, may, by thy good providence, be brought
 to nought; that we thy servants, being hurt by no
 persecutions, may march forth in thy service, and
 evermore give thanks unto thee in the holy Church;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Trinity 21

Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: Baruch 3:14-15, 29-37

Second Lesson: John 9:1-38

Homily to be written

Trinity 21

Morning Prayer C

First Lesson: Exod 33:1, 12-23

Second Lesson: Heb 4:1-13

Homily to be written

Trinity 21

Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: Gen 15:1-6

Second Lesson: Rom 4:1-8

Homily

*"Abraham believed God,
and it was counted unto him for righteousness."*

We heard St. Paul,
we heard the passage he quoted from Genesis,
and, in hearing them,
we have heard the center and core
of today's readings.

We have heard one of the most bitterly argued
concepts found in all of Scripture,
an argument that lies at the center
of that sad division in Christianity
that we call the Reformation.

The Reformers were constantly shouting
other words of St. Paul, that we are
"justified by faith, without the works of the Law,"
giving an impression they did not intend:
that good works are therefore not important.
St. James, on the other hand, declares,

at least twice in the same Epistle, that
"Faith without works is dead,"
and St. Paul, responding to the notion
that forgiveness gives us a license to sin,
gives a resounding "NO",
or as our Authorized version translates it,
"God forbid!"

It matters what we do.

It matters very much indeed.

It mattered that Abraham obeyed God in what he
did.

In fact, if he hadn't obeyed God,
he wouldn't have been the father of a nation,
nor would he be the ancestor of the Messiah.
His faith in the promise God had given him
was what led him to the course of action
by which his faith was fulfilled.

By his faith and the works that flowed from it,
we are brought to the place where we
are able to have faith in that same Messiah,
and to follow Him in expressing that faith.

What St. Paul wants us to be very clear about here,
however, is that it is not our works
that bring us to salvation, but rather our faith,
and that our faith (if it is real)
will lead us to good works.

"Now to him that worketh," wrote the Apostle,
"is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. "

Do you hear a little light sarcasm here?
 If we can be good enough to earn salvation,
 we are treating God
 as though He owes us something.
 Does He? Does He have to save us?
 Can we manage to be good enough
 to force the issue?

*"All have sinned
 and come short of the glory of God,"*
 is what he says elsewhere.

It is we that owe God something,
 and it is a debt we cannot pay.
 If we think we can earn our way to heaven,
 it's not going to work. We simply can't.

St. Paul continues:
*"But to him that worketh not,
 but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,
 his faith is counted for righteousness."*

As Jesus said more than once,
"Thy faith hath made thee whole."
 That's an unearned gift,
 but He went on to say, again, more than once,

"Go, and sin no more."

Good works follow faith.

If there are no works, one can safely assume
 that there is no faith.

If the Holy Spirit is present, there will be fruit,
 as St. Paul wrote in Galatians,

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
 longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
 Meekness, temperance."*

If these are not present and growing,
 it is because there is no living faith.

St. Paul quotes from Psalm 32:

*"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven,
 and whose sins are covered.
 Blessed is the man
 to whom the Lord will not impute sin."*

But he knew also the words of the First Psalm:

*Blessed is the man that walketh
 not in the counsel of the ungodly,
 nor standeth in the way of sinners,
 nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
 But his delight is in the law of the LORD;*

and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

When grace is received through faith,
a gift has been given,
regardless of what we have done,
but, if we have really received that gift,
the good works,
though they cannot save us,
will certainly follow,
and faith without works is pretended faith.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who declarest thy glory and showest forth thy handiwork in the heavens and in the earth; Deliver us, we beseech thee, in our several callings, from the service of mammon, that, justified by faith in the Cross of Christ, we may do the work which thou givest us to do, in truth, in beauty, and in righteousness, with singleness of heart as thy servants, and to the benefit of our fellow men; for the sake of him who came among us as one that serveth, the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Trinity 21

Evening Prayer B

First Lesson: 2 Kings 5:1-15a

Second Lesson: John 4:46b-54

Homily to be written

Trinity 21

Evening Prayer C

First Lesson: 2 Kings 6:8-23

Second Lesson: Acts 25:1-22

Homily to be written