

Trinity 22

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

In 2009 use the lessons for Third Sunday before Advent with today's collect.

In 2011 this is the Sunday Next Before Advent; use that day's lessons and collect.

Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Ecclesiasticus 27:30-28:7

Second Lesson: Matt 18:7-20

Homily

The words of our Lord that we heard today call for a slow and somewhat detailed look:

*"Woe unto the world because of offences!
for it must needs be that offences come;
but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"*

We need to know that Our Lord was not talking about hurt feelings here.

He was talking about the ways that we can put stumbling blocks

(that's another translation of the Greek word) in the way of those seeking God.

These things will happen, he says,

but the one who causes them has a heavy responsibility for the results.

*Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee,
cut them off, and cast them from thee:
it is better for thee to enter into life
halt or maimed,
rather than having two hands or two feet
to be cast into everlasting fire.
And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out,
and cast it from thee:
it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye,
rather than having two eyes
to be cast into hell fire.*

That's a pretty graphic way to hammer home the point. Of course it's not about self-mutilation, but about attitude.

It's far, far better to put up with hurt ourselves, even a lot of hurt, than to drive others away by our own faults. This much is an introduction to the main message, one that is painful to those of us who consider ourselves as among the righteous. It's about our attitude toward those who don't 'measure up.'

*Take heed that ye despise not
one of these little ones;
for I say unto you,
That in heaven their angels do always behold
the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

Does that mean even sinners have guardian angels?
It certainly sounds that way,
and it certainly does fit with the oft-expressed idea
that God is insistently calling sinners to Himself.

*For the Son of man is come to save
that which was lost.*

That's all of us for sure.
Without the Cross
we would all be lost and condemned,
but it applies even more to those
who don't yet know Him,
or to those who have strayed away.

*How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep,
and one of them be gone astray,
doth he not leave the ninety and nine,
and goeth into the mountains,
and seeketh that which is gone astray?*

*And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you,
he rejoiceth more of that sheep,
than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.*

*Even so it is not the will
of your Father which is in heaven,
that one of these little ones should perish.*

And yet we so often turn away,
in anger or disgust,
from those who are not doing
as we think they should,
or from those who hurt our feelings.
We build walls.
We put up stumbling blocks.
Our anger destroys our love,
and we reject those Our Lord is calling.

Did you listen to those intensely hard words
from Ecclesiasticus?

*One man beareth hatred against another,
and doth he seek pardon from the Lord?
He sheweth no mercy to a man,
which is like himself:
and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins?
If he that is but flesh nourish hatred,
who will intreat for pardon of his sins?*

How dare an unforgiving man ask forgiveness?
Can he really expect to be forgiven?
In the same place we heard:

"Forgive thy neighbour

*the hurt that he hath done unto thee,
so shall thy sins also be forgiven
when thou prayest. "*

Isn't that just what we pray
every time we say the Lord's Prayer?

Jesus gave very clear instructions
as to how disputes should be handled.
It would take another sermon to unpack this,
but listen to what He said:

*"...if thy brother shall trespass against thee,
go and tell him his fault
between thee and him alone:
if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.
But if he will not hear thee,
then take with thee one or two more,
that in the mouth of two or three witnesses
every word may be established.
And if he shall neglect to hear them,
tell it unto the church:
but if he neglect to hear the church,
let him be unto thee as an heathen man
and a publican.*

There's a way to handle discord,
and it's not the way we do it.
Are we putting up stumbling blocks?
Are we presenting the Church as a place

where anger and judgment rule?
Are we making it look
as though sinners are unwelcome among us?
Do we bite and devour one another?
What do seekers after God see when they look at us?

"... woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

Let us pray.

O most mighty God and merciful Father,
who hast compassion upon all men,
and wouldest not the death of a sinner,
but rather that he should turn from his sin,
and be saved;
Fill us with that same compassion,
turn our hearts to those whom thou dost call,
deliver us from anger and scorn,
and bring us together with those, thy lost sheep,
unto everlasting life
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[see also the sermon by Canon Hollister
under this date
in the Sermons by Other Authors](#)

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Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: Baruch 5

Second Lesson: 1 John 2:24-29

Homily to be written

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Morning Prayer C

First Lesson: Num 20:14-29

Second Lesson: 2 Tim 1:3-14

Homily to be written

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Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: 1 Kings 8:46-53

Second Lesson: Luke 7:36-50

Homily

What a pair of readings today!
These are realistic and challenging lessons,
uncompromising with regard to sin,
and yet filled with the amazing grace of God.

The First Lesson is merely the last part
of Solomon's long prayer
at the dedication of the Temple
he had just built for the Lord.
In setting this house apart to be a house of prayer,
the king-builder lists many sins
the people might commit,
and many troubles that might befall them.

"If...," he said, these things come to pass,
*"Hear thou in heaven thy dwellingplace:
and when thou hearest, forgive."* (v. 30)
"... and forgive and do, and give ..." (v.39)
*"... and do according to all
that the stranger calleth to thee for..."* (v.43)

"... and maintain their cause." (v.45)

Which brings us to today's lesson:

*"If they sin against thee,
(for there is no man that sinneth not,)"*

It's as St. Paul wrote to the Romans:

*"All have sinned,
and come short of the glory of God."*

Realism requires us to recognize
that sin is universal among men.

No one lives a life pleasing to God,
and we know that God takes sin seriously.
There are consequences,
either in this life or hereafter.
Solomon's prayer recognizes that defeat,
captivity, and exile are likely results of sin.
In fact, history tells us that these results came,
just a few generations later,
and that the people were indeed taken away
and oppressed.

For such an eventuality,
now known to be a certainty,

the king's prayer
 does not picture a complaining people,
 who consider their fate to be unjust,
 nor a people ready to rebel,
 and to take what is rightly theirs,
 but rather a people who know they deserve the worst
 and who come to God admitting it,
 repenting, and begging forgiveness,
 and so he prays:

*“Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication
 in heaven thy dwelling place,
 and maintain their cause,
 And forgive thy people that have sinned against
 thee,”*

So it is that Jesus sits in the house
 of an expert in the Law,
 as the guest of one
 who believes in his own righteousness,
 considering himself better than others.
 As a Pharisee, his host would have considered
 the Roman occupation to be a horrible thing,
 and would have grumbled at Rome's many offenses
 against the holiness of Israel's ways.
 He deserved better treatment than he had,
 or so he thought.

That woman came in,
 a woman of a certain bad reputation,
 who apparently deserved her reputation,
 and began to make of Jesus
 in ways his host did not consider seemly.

Now, take a close look at Jesus' response to this.
 It wasn't at all what we might expect.
 It doesn't match our usual way of thinking.
 Let's face it:

If any of us had been in that situation
 without knowing just who Jesus was,
 we would have been sure He was nuts.
 Well, he compared
 his upstanding, respectable, religious host
 to this disreputable fallen woman,
 and which did he seem to prefer?
 Did that make sense?
 How many of us, even knowing Jesus,
 could have seen things that way?
 How do we act if someone less than respectable
 shows up in our churches,
 or in our homes?

We have, all of us, received gifts from God.
 We are able to come to Him as our Father.
 We have been baptized.
 We are invited to partake of His Body and Blood.

We rejoice in the hope of heaven.

Do we deserve any of this?

Have we earned any part of it?

Are we worthy?

Of course we are not,

and yet St. Paul warns very sternly
against eating and drinking unworthily.

How can we accept or even ask for
all these blessings.

How can we be worthy?

It's a paradox, perhaps,

but the worthy are those who know they are not,

those who admit their sins, and regret them,

and ask for forgiveness

and for amendment of life.

“Lord, I am not worthy,” they say,

as would those that Solomon envisioned,

as did that fallen woman,

and He responds, “You are forgiven. Come.”

Those who know their unworthiness,

He declares to be worthy,

and applies all the benefits of the Cross.

But to those who think themselves worthy,

his word is, “I never knew you.”

Let us pray.

Open our hearts and our minds, blessed Lord, to
know our unworthiness, bring us to repentance, and
to the knowledge of thy great mercy. By thy Cross
redeem us, and call us to everlasting life. Amen.

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Evening Prayer B

First Lesson: Zech 7:8-14

Second Lesson: Matt 18:21-35

Homily to be written

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Evening Prayer C

First Lesson: 2 Kings 9:1-6, 10b-13, 16-26

Second Lesson: Acts 26

Homily to be written