

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER¹

The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the thirty-third Chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy.³

“And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir [**SEA-urr**] unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran [**PAY-runn**], and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.

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“There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun [**dgih-SHOE-runn**], who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the first Verse of Jude.⁴

“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus

Christ. ... But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily:

Today’s Second Lesson is from the Epistle of Jude. We are so used to the Epistles of Paul, which were explicitly directed either towards a specific congregation or to a specific individual, that we forget the General Epistles. Jude’s is one of these. It is not directed towards a specific congregation, or to a specific individual or group of individuals, but towards all Christians, wherever and whenever they are.

Think about that! Jude is writing to US! So we ought to listen carefully to what he’s saying. His plain purpose is two-fold: to exhort us to “contend for the faith” and to warn us of “mockers, ... who walk after their own ungodly lusts.”

The first of these purposes is simple and straightforward (even if not necessarily easy or comfortable): to preach and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To hold ourselves by our lives as examples of godly living such that others may see how they should act, and seek to emulate these godly ways. It means preaching the good word whenever the opportunity presents itself. It means praying diligently. It means helping the less-fortunate, the ill and shut-ins, and where possible, to bring into the Christian fold all those who are ready to receive Christ’s word.

Jude's second purpose is directly connected to the first. He is reminding us that Christ Himself often warned us against those who seek to pervert the Gospel, and to preach false doctrine. It is our misfortune to live in a time when such is so prevalent that the true Gospel frequently gets drowned out by the false. Not only do we have those preaching doctrines incompatible with the Gospel, but we have their allies, the scoffers and agnostics who seek to confuse men with their skepticism and sophistry.

Jesus tells us to "beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." He also tells us the parable of the wheat and the tares: how a farmer planted his wheat, but the devil came along behind him and planted tares among the wheat. The tares are like these "false prophets", and those led by them into sin. Jesus instructs us to "let both grow together until the harvest" and He will separate them once they are gathered. By this, we are to infer that, even though we seem beset with such as seek to mislead, they have been with us from the beginning, and (unfortunately) will be with us until the Last Judgment. Even so, we are to contend against them, by prayer, and by our living and proclaiming the true Gospel.

Jude reminds us we have a duty to have compassion (of those who have been misled), to make a difference in their lives. And others we are to save by "pulling them out of the fire", even though we are afraid at the task.

Jude concludes his epistle by reminding us the Jesus Himself will be our helper in these tasks, as long as we are faithful and call upon His name. And he reminds us that we should always give glory and praise and worship to the Trinity. In so doing, we become better fitted to the task Jesus gives us. And to this we may well, with the apostle, affix our hearty AMEN!

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¹ “Any set of Psalms and Lessons appointed for the evening of any day may be read at the morning service, and any set of morning Psalms and Lessons may be read in the evening.” *Concerning the Service of the Church, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER* viii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

² *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER* xxxix (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

³ *Deuteronomy 33:1-3, 26-29 (KJV).*

⁴ *Jude 1-4, 17-25 (KJV).*

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