

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER
The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity¹

Lessons:²

The First Lesson:³ Here beginneth the thirty-fifth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.⁴

“The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim [***dgeh-HOY-uh-kim***] the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, Go unto the house of the Rechabites [***REE-kab-ights***], and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. Then I took Jaazaniah [***dgay-az-uh-NYE-uh***] the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziah [***HAB-uh-zih-NYE-uh***], and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites [***REE-kab-ights***]; And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan [***HAY-nan***], the son of Igdaliah [***igg-duh-LYE-uh***], a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah [***may-uh-SIGH-uh***] the son of Shallum [***SHALL-oom***], the keeper of the door: And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites [***REE-kab-ights***] pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab [***DGAHN-uh-dab***] the son of Rechab [***REE-kab***] our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab [***DGAHN-uh-dab***] the son of Rechab [***REE-kab***] our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab [***DGAHN-uh-dab***] our father commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar [***nebb-you-kad-REZZ-ur***]

king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

“Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith **[SETH]** the LORD. The words of Jonadab **[DGAHN-uh-dab]** the son of Rechab **[REE-kab]**, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father’s commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. Because the sons of Jonadab **[DGAHN-uh-dab]** the son of Rechab **[REE-kab]** have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: Therefore thus saith **[SETH]** the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.

“And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites **[REE-kab-ights]**, Thus saith **[SETH]** the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab **[DGAHN-uh-dab]** your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: Therefore thus saith **[SETH]** the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab **[DGAHN-uh-dab]** the son of Rechab **[REE-kab]** shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.”

Or,

³ *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxiv (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

⁴ Jeremiah 35:1-end (KJV).

⁵ Jeremiah 36:1-end (KJV).

⁶ St. John 14:1-end (KJV).

⁷ Acts 10:38 (KJV).

⁸ II Kings 2:9 *ff*; St. John 14:12.

⁹ Acts 2:13-15 (KJV).

¹⁰ I Corinthians 14:2.

¹¹ Revelation 5:9-10 (KJV).

¹² Acts 2:16-18, *quoting* Joel 2:28 (KJV).

¹³ I Corinthians 2:14.

¹⁴ I Corinthians 12:12, 27 (KJV).

¹⁵ St. John 14:15-17a (KJV).

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Here beginneth the thirty-sixth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.⁵

“And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. Then Jeremiah called Baruch [**BAY-ruk**h] the son of Neriah [**neh-RYE-uh**]: and Baruch [**BAY-ruk**h] wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch [**BAY-ruk**h], saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD: Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD's house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities. It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people. And Baruch [**BAY-ruk**h] the son of Neriah [**neh-RYE-uh**] did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD's house. And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem. Then read Baruch [**BAY-ruk**h] in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah [**gem-uh-RYE-uh**] the son of Shaphan [**SHAY-fann**] the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house, in the ears of all the people.

“When Michaiah [**mih-KYE-uh**] the son of Gemariah [**gem-uh-RYE-uh**], the son of Shaphan [**SHAY-fann**], had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD, Then he went down into the king’s house, into the scribe’s chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama [**ih-LISH-uh-muh**] the scribe, and Delaiah [**dih-LYE-uh**] the son of Shemaiah [**shih-MAY-uh**], and Elnathan [**ell-NAY-thunn**] the son of Achbor [**AK-bore**], and Gemariah [**gem-uh-RYE-uh**] the son of Shaphan [**SHAY-fann**], and Zedekiah [**zedd-uh-KYE-uh**] the son of Hananiah [**hann-uh-NYE-uh**], and all the princes. Then Michaiah [**mih-KYE-uh**] declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch [**BAY-ruk**] read the book in the ears of the people. Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi [**dgeh-HUGH-dee**] the son of Nethaniah [**neth-uh-NYE-uh**], the son of Shelemiah [**shell-uh-MY-uh**], the son of Cushi [**KEW-she**], unto Baruch [**BAY-ruk**], saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch [**BAY-ruk**] the son of Neriah [**neh-RYE-uh**] took the roll in his hand, and came unto them. And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch [**BAY-ruk**] read it in their ears. Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch [**BAY-ruk**], We will surely tell the king of all these words. And they asked Baruch [**BAY-ruk**], saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth? Then Baruch [**BAY-ruk**] answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book. Then said the princes unto Baruch [**BAY-ruk**], Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

“And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama [**ih-LISH-uh-muh**] the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. So the king sent Jehudi [**dgeh-HUGH-dee**] to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama [**ih-LISH-uh-muh**] the scribe’s chamber. And Jehudi [**dgeh-HUGH-dee**] read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it

of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”¹⁴

So, I have not spoken carelessly in saying that the Church is Chapter Two of the Incarnation. Jesus goes about now doing good and healing, and He chooses to do so through you, the Body of Christ and members in particular. Christ Himself is here by the Holy Spirit, the other Comforter who is with us and in us.

The day of Pentecost which was the occasion for this outpouring of the Spirit was a feast in the Law of Moses when the first sheaf of the harvest was waved before the Lord. It was also the same day that the Lord had descended on Mount Sinai, when the whole nation of Israel heard the voice of God as He spoke His Ten Commandments. Therefore, it is quite fitting that the Lord Jesus foretold the outpouring of the Spirit in terms of His Commandments: *“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth.”¹⁵*

So if we remain faithful to Him, we continue to take part in His Incarnation as the Church, the Body of Christ. For His Spirit not only comes upon us, but abides within us always.

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The Rev’d Robert Hart¹⁶
May 27, 2012

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Lesson for the Epistle and the Gospel at Mass on Whitsunday, 2012.

² *An Alternative Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised in 1928)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, WITH THE ADDITIONS AND DEVIATIONS PROPOSED IN 1928 43 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxviii (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxvii (CIPBC 1963).

Him with the eyes; for he was now part of the Body of which Christ is the Head.

Many a time Peter had stumbled and tripped over his own tongue and he had failed to speak the right words on the night in which his Lord was betrayed. But now he spoke with more clarity, more power and more authority than any prophet of the Old Covenant. He delivered the first Christian sermon, as he was now the fisher of men Christ had foreseen; his dragnet of words brought in about three thousand souls. The young Church, now empowered to be the Body of Christ, thrived with healthy vital signs.

None of this was man-made. The best efforts of organization could not have produced it; the most detailed planning could not have pulled it off. No human effort could have brought it forth in a day, because the Day of Pentecost was Chapter Two of the Word made flesh. The Body of Christ now came into the world.

What is the life of the Church? It is the Holy Spirit present within us. What is the strength of the Church? It is the power (δύναμις, *dunamis*) of God by His Holy Spirit, present within us. Frankly, in light of the foolishness of sinful men, it is very obvious that God's power and grace have never depended on anyone less than God Himself. Never think that we, as the Church, have succeeded in anything simply by our own human cleverness, or our best laid plans, or our own strength. We have an organized structure, but the permanent shape of that structure was revealed and enacted by the Holy Spirit. The whole life of the Church is *charismatic* (χάρισμα); from the receiving of Scripture to the Sacraments, from the Apostolic Succession to the faithful service of each member.

It was St. Paul, speaking in the context of spiritual gifts, who called the Church by the name of Christ Himself: "*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members*

came to pass, that when Jehudi [**dgeh-HUGH-dee**] had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. Nevertheless Elnathan [**ell-NAY-thunn]** and Delaiah [**dih-LYE-uh**] and Gemariah [**gem-uh-RYE-uh**] had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them. But the king commanded Jerahmeel [**dgih-RAH-mih-ell**] the son of Hammelech [**HAMM-uh-leck**], and Seraiah [**sih-RYE-uh**] the son of Azriel [**AZZ-rih-ell**], and Shelemiah [**shell-uh-MY-uh**] the son of Abdeel [**ABB-dih-ell**], to take Baruch [**BAY-ruk**] the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

"Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch [**BAY-ruk**] wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] the king of Judah hath burned. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] king of Judah, Thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD of Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

"Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch [**BAY-ruk**] the scribe, the son of Neriah [**neh-RYE-uh**]; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words."

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the fourteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.⁶

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith [SETH] unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith [SETH] unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith [SETH] unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith [SETH] unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

spoken in their own tongues, by men who never *learned* to speak them, but were simply *given* utterance of praise and thanksgiving for “*the wonderful works of God,*” this was not a thing to be treated with contempt, but with fear. It was a sign. The division of mankind into different nations through the confusion of tongues at Babel is undone within the Church. In Christ we are one Body, gathered by one Spirit from the four corners of the earth.

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”¹¹

Peter had no trouble identifying what had happened, and doing so from Scripture:

“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.”¹²

Peter had changed. Before, he had been a “natural” (ψυχικός *psychikos*-soulish) man,¹³ unable earlier in his life to understand why the Christ, the Son of the Living God, was ready and willing to take up the Cross; later he was afraid and denied the Lord three times. But, now he stood on his feet boldly, not afraid of death, having his mind focused on the truth, able to understand and know from Scripture everything that had unfolded and was unfolding. Though before he had been a disciple for more than three years, he was on this day closer to Christ than at any time before, even when he had seen

in the Roman Empire spoke enough Greek to get by, as it was the international language, these pilgrims heard the disciples speaking in the languages of their own distant homelands.

Anyone with genuine experience of such things knows fully well that this was not something uncontrollable, not the result of a trance or ecstasy, and certainly not emotionalism; the speaking was subject fully to the self-control of each one who spoke in these other tongues; but the words themselves were known only to those foreigners who heard the word of God each in his own native tongue. As St. Luke wrote in the second Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles:

“Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, where in we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome. Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.”

What were these tongues (γλῶσσα, *glōssa*) that we read about? How did they serve as a sign for unbelievers? Why did God choose a thing that seemed so weak and foolish that on-lookers were filled with derision? *“Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.”* The Scripture goes on to say, *“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.”*⁹

The many disciples spoke mysteries to God, understood by none of the local men.¹⁰ But to those who heard the truth

Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily:

Fifty days after the real Passover, when, after dying for the sins of the whole world, Christ rose from the dead, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in Jerusalem in the event we call Pentecost. The crowd saw the tongues of fire and heard the rushing mighty wind. They heard the disciples declare the works of God—Christ’s miracles and especially His resurrec-

tion—in the native languages of people who had come from all over the empire. The event was real and it was supernatural. Saint Peter (no longer afraid, no longer denying the Lord) declared the Gospel. Through his preaching, about three thousand people were converted.

This was God’s gift to the Church of the Holy Spirit, which Our Lord foretold in today’s Second Lesson. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, with His power and His gifts, is every bit as real as the Incarnation, though very different in kind. Through the Incarnation God was present in the earth in the Person of His Son, without any sin, without any taint of original sin. Through the coming of the Holy Spirit God is present in the earth through sinners who are called to become—every one of them—saints. In the Incarnation God was present in His Son to go about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil; through the coming of the Holy Spirit, Christ is present in His Church to continue this very ministry.

Through the Incarnation Christ was present in a body of flesh and blood. Through the coming of the Holy Spirit, Christ is present in His Body, the Church, of which you are the members, the parts. In us, by the Holy Spirit, Christ remains a tangible, physical and visible reality. His Incarnation is extended through His Body the Church. Where we gather together He is present.

Upon what do we depend? Is it enough to have good plans, and useful ideas? These are good things, but they are not enough. If the disciples had depended upon a brilliant plan, a sure-fire market strategy to build the Church, we would not even remember their names. The Church suddenly became a powerful reality in the world on the day of Pentecost, and that for one reason: The Comforter—that is, “the Strengthener”—Spirit had come *in power*. The Risen Lord Jesus had told them to do nothing, but simply to remain in the city until endued with power from on high. The Risen Lord Jesus Christ commanded

them to take no action at all until then. So they waited and prayed during those ten days after the Lord ascended to the Father’s right hand; and then the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, came upon them.

Christ, as touching His human body as Jesus of Nazareth, had stepped behind the veil when a cloud took Him out of their sight. Then, on the Day of Pentecost, the Church emerged as the Body of Christ in what we might call the second chapter of the Incarnation. God the Word (*λόγος, logos*) came into the world on the Day of the Annunciation, and showed Himself in His Nativity when He was born in Bethlehem. He walked the earth as a man, and “*went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.*”⁷

He still goes about doing good and healing all who are oppressed of the devil, this time through the Church which is His Body. Make no mistake about it; when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, the Church became the Body of Christ just as truly as Christ had been born in Bethlehem. Our ministry as the Church is His ministry, as He extends His Incarnation through us, and goes about doing good, but not only as far as *one* man may travel.

Now He goes into every place on earth, preaching the Gospel in all the world as a testimony to all nations, gathering out of all nations those who are His disciples. The Church, His bride and His Body, believes and does works greater in number, just as the disciple Elisha did twice the miracles of Elijah the prophet, when a double portion of the same Spirit rested on him.⁸

On Pentecost, among the many people in Jerusalem who had come for the feast, were pilgrims from various nations, that is the God-fearers and proselytes who were born as Gentiles, and either had begun to convert to Judaism, or had fully converted. Also, there many Jews of the Diaspora who lived most of the time in foreign countries. Although just about everyone