

SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER
Trinity Sunday¹

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the sixth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.³

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

“Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the first Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark.⁴

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission

of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily:

Apples cost a lot if they are hard to get. Great works of art are expensive because they are scarce. When the supply of oil goes up, the price goes down. But in the economy of God's Kingdom, as something becomes more plenteous, it becomes more precious. Water covers two-thirds of the earth's surface, and is plenteous throughout the world. In a fallen world this plenitude may make water seem ordinary or mundane or less expensive. But in God's Kingdom, water is what Jesus lowers Himself into in His Baptism in the Jordan River.

By going into the water, Jesus connects with creation. When He rises up out of it, He hallows all the waters of the world. He hallows all creation. All waters and all wellsprings are now potentially fountains of Baptism, waters of the new birth, wellsprings of the new creation. Now, in Christ, water's vast supply increases rather than diminishes its value, because in Christ, water is man's means of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, being born again. Water in all its plenitude is super-enhanced as the means of baptizing all creation into God, the

give; to know peace, spread peace, and you will be cooperating with the One who said, “out of (your) belly shall flow springs of living water.”⁸ The ultimate flow is upwards, with Jesus as He comes up out of the water, and the Dove descends on us, and lifts each one of us with Him, through His Cross, into His Resurrection, and in His ascension, to sit, and reign with Him in heavenly places, all the way to the right hand of the Father, at His Table, in His Kingdom, in our Holy Communion this morning.

This lifting up is irrepressible. Nothing, no tragedy, no force, can thwart the new creation which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Things which were cast down are being raised up. However grim, however desperate, any situation, the Holy Spirit is making a way, so that all things can return to unity in Christ, by whom all things were made.

—oo0oo—

The Rt. Rev'd Paul C. Hewett, SSC⁹
January 15, 2012

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Mass on the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, 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 38 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxii (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxx (CIPBC 1963).

³ Isaiah 6:1-8 (KJV).

⁴ St. Mark 1:1-11 (KJV).

⁵ Zechariah 13:1.

⁶ St. Luke 6:38.

⁷ R. M. Benson.

⁸ St. John 7:38.

⁹ Bishop Ordinary, the Diocese of the Holy Cross; Rector, the Cathedral Church of the Epiphany, Columbia, SC.

most holy Trinity, so that all life is restored as a means of communion with Him.

Kingdom economics is a reversal of the economics of the fallen world. Plenitude and surplus increase something's value. In John's account of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, there are twelve basketsful left over, after the feeding of the multitudes. In the Eucharist, wine becomes the redemptive Blood of Christ, in an overflowing river, a Fountain, flowing inexhaustibly in torrents throughout the world, this very Sunday morning.⁵ This overturns economic logic. The Precious Blood of Christ is inexhaustibly plenteous in Holy Communion. This infinite supply increases rather than decreases its preciousness. Preciousness increases with plenty.

Because Jesus rose from the waters of the Jordan, all creation is raised with Him. The heavens, that had been closed by the misdeeds of the first Adam, are opened again by the sacrifice of the Second Adam. The Second Adam shows that our destiny is beyond time, and that man is not just an animal; we are made for fellowship with the Father. The Holy Spirit gives testimony and the Trinity is manifested.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem tells us “that in manifesting Jesus as Christ, the Baptism of Jesus reveals to us at the same time the mystery of the divine Trinity. Indeed, for there to be a Christ, an anointed Son, there must be One who anoints Him, that is, the Father; and One Who is the Unction, that is, the Holy Spirit Who remains on Him. Therefore we cannot think of Christ without thinking at the same time of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Without them the word ‘Christ’ would have no meaning. We cannot confess Jesus as Christ without confessing the one God as God in three Persons.”

The more people we baptize, the better. In the Kingdom, more is better. Value increases with abundance. Kingdom thinking gives the lie to the secularist myth of overpopulation. There can never be too many people in God's Kingdom.

We can trust God for our needs, and for ingenuity in dealing with challenges. His providence is always overflowing, always bountiful. He inspires us with skills and technologies to produce more of all our needs at less cost. His grace is working everywhere. His graces warm our hearts with confidence in Him and strength to work hard and engage in possibility thinking. God's love for us warms us and thaws out our cold, stubborn hearts. But atheism is cold. Without God we fear for ourselves and become stingy. Provision is meted out with cold calculations, not first to women and children, to the weak and vulnerable, but to whomever can grab something first.

When we think of God's provision, the words "thawing," and "flowing," come to mind. The waters of the Sea of Galilee flow and are fresh. But the waters of the Dead Sea are stagnant and extremely salty. There is little that can live in them. So there is a principle of flowing. We get by giving: we enrich ourselves by giving away. We practice this all the time: at Christmas, or when we give blood, or visit someone who is sick, or give money to the Church or to charities, or listen to another's problems or finish our chores. Even in using our muscles and our brains, this principle is at work. The more we use them, the more they grow. We benefit from the people we serve and care for.

It was in the flowing, giving waters of the River Jordan that Jesus was baptized. The waters of the Dead Sea have no outflow. The water is super-brackish. But over the flowing, giving waters of the River Jordan, the Anointer sends the Anointing onto the Anointed One. Each divine Person infinitely pours out His infinite glory into the Other, and then, into us. Our challenge is to let the Holy Spirit pour out of us back through the Son, to the Father, and into others. "Rise, and shine, and give God your glory, glory"; "Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom."⁶

Our heavenly Father has promised us the flow of His Holy Spirit to help us with difficult situations. The Holy Spirit is always with us and in us. The only way to stop His flow is to keep, grab, and hoard for ourselves, and then we become like the Dead Sea. The flow of communication and good will goes a long way to solve many problems. Sometimes the way forward is to give a little bit; start a flow of life-giving communication. In this Liturgy there is a powerful flow of life-changing grace, the joy and fragrance of the Holy Spirit which transform the world.

When we bless things, like our food at meals, or our homes, or civic occasions, troops before battle, or sessions of Congress, or fox hunts, or teams before a game, or ships, or fishing fleets, pregnant women or even spacecraft, we are staking out larger and larger claims for the Kingdom. In proclaiming God's blessing, we baptize the things of this world in the name of the Trinity. More is better. Let God's grace flow! We bless the things of our lives by giving thanks for them, by baptizing them, by linking them up, connecting them, to God.

That is what we do every time we give thanks to God for something or someone. God multiplies what we offer to Him beyond measure. And the more we use of His gifts, the more there is. We move out to build the Church, to build new moral fiber in our nation. We enter into the heart of our mission, as Jesus did at His Baptism. Ninety percent of all people who have ever lived are living today. The fields are white for harvest. Multitudes hunger for the Word of God, and thirst for the Living Water, are famished for the Bread of Life and are pining for the Precious Blood, so as to know, joy upon joy, that through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, God, our heavenly Father, has become our life.

When we go through dry times and God seems very far away, let us turn, again and again, to the Psalms, "the war songs of the Prince of Peace".⁷ Psalm 46 says, "there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God." To be enriched,