

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER
The Second Sunday in Advent¹

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the thirty-third Verse of the tenth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.³

“Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

Or,

Here beginneth the tenth Verse of the eleventh Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.⁴

“And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros [**PATH-russ**], and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar [**SHY-narr**], and from Hamath [**HAY-muth**], and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim [**EE-frih-eem**] shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim [**EE-frih-eem**] shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim [**EE-frih-eem**]. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

“And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”

er to run off to somewhere every time someone says that Jesus is either just here or there. Only the simplest of minds would choose to believe that He can only be in one place at a time. God is limitless. He can do all things and is present in all things. We are warned not to be fooled by the evil one's claims that imply limitations on God.

By learning about and worshipping Him in the company of other believers, we learn how to show Him the respect that He deserves. We learn how to conduct ourselves with Him and with our fellow man. By knowing Him and all that He is, we are not enslaved by the belief that we should be running around searching for Him. This is why we are taught that it is right that we should, at all times and in all places, give Him thanks and praise.

With that said, here is a most proper ending: "To Him Be All Honor and Praise, World without End. Amen."

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The Rev'd George Parrish⁷
February 13, 2011

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Gospel at Mass on the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, 2011.

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 30 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxi (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xix (CIPBC 1963).

³ Isaiah 10:33—11:9 (KJV).

⁴ Isaiah 11:10—12:end (KJV).

⁵ St. Matthew 24:29-end (KJV).

⁶ *I.e.*, Noah.

⁷ Priest, The Diocese of New Orleans, The Anglican Catholic Church.

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the twenty-ninth Verse of the twenty-fourth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.⁵

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe⁶ were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise

servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily:

When we first read or hear the words of today’s Second Lesson, they can seem a little more than upsetting. They can even be downright scary. These are some of the passages that plenty of folks use and have used to predict the time of Jesus’ Second Coming. A Doomsday prophecy and End of Days’ prediction can be constructed from them but, fortunately, in the Catholic churches we do not pick and choose texts from the Bible to formulate our own ideas on what Scripture means. We Catholic, or otherwise said, Universal, Christians use a liturgical cycle of lessons. These are lessons that have been set by the Church Universal for many, many years—in fact, in many cases, for more than a millenium.

In a liturgical cycle, we get to experience Christ as if we were living in the times that He was present on earth as a Man. We see His birth and all that knew Him from that point. We get to witness His miracles and His teachings. We are present at His death and Resurrection. We are His family and get to store in our hearts all of His life, lessons and miracles, like St. Luke reports the Blessed Virgin Mary did.

Today’s Second Lesson reminds us of what it means to live a Christian life and just what the ultimate purpose of that life is. Many times, especially when someone dies, we hear that although they may not have attended church much; or even at all, but still, the deceased lived what is described as “a good Christian life.”

Here is an interesting thought. A man can be a model husband, son, brother and friend. He can be honest and forthright, but Christianity does not necessarily have the market cornered on these traits. They are definite musts for a Christian, but anyone can be this way. It is even possible to live this way and claim to not be Christian or even a believer in any God.

In the two great Commandments in Jesus’ Summary of the Law, this is the second one. The first is to love God with our whole heart, mind and soul. So yes, our conduct toward fellow man is important and necessary, but so is our conduct towards God. We are to worship and glorify Him. This is something that is done through our worship of Him. The essential part of Christian living is to worship God and look for His presence in the company of all of His children, with all the faithful believers.

Now let’s look at some of the specifics of the Gospel message. As far as Christ’s being solely in the desert or hidden away, Christians hold fast to the idea that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and that whenever two or more are gathered together in His name, He is present.

Think about this; is Christ like a lightning strike that can happen anywhere? I suppose an alternative question may answer this. Did the Son of God come as a quick flash of light and a clap of thunder and then disappear, or did He come as a light to the world, both gentile and Jew?

I believe that the answer to the second question is much more than sufficient. It is not in the character of the true believ-