

**SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER**  
**The Sunday after Ascension Day<sup>1</sup>**

**Lessons:**<sup>2</sup>

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the thirtieth Chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy.<sup>3</sup>

“And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers: If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

“For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

*Or,*

Here beginneth the thirty-fourth Chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy.<sup>4</sup>

“And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo [**KNEE-bow**], to the top of Pisgah [**PIZZ-gah**], that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed [**SHOWD**] him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, And all Naph-tali [**NAFF-tuh-lye**], and the land of Ephraim [**EE-frih-eam**], and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea,

And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar [**ZOE-urr**]. And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

“So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor [**beth-PEA-are**]: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

“And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

“And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

“And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

“And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh [**FAY-row**], and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed [**SHOWD**] in the sight of all Israel.”

*Or,*

Here beginneth the seventeenth Verse of the sixty-fifth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.<sup>5</sup>

“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old

man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith [SETH] the LORD."

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the fifth Verse of the sixteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.<sup>6</sup>

"... But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew [SHOW] you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [SHOW] it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of

Lord, lead us each day to better understand Your will and Your way for us. Give us the maturity and the grace to be able to understand and function in Your truth. As we grow in the fullness of Your truth, let us day by day understand and accept more and more, until in Your time we and all Your Saints are ready to be brought into the joy of Your Eternal Kingdom. This we pray in the Most Holy name of Jesus. Amen.

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April 28, 2013

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion on the Fourth Sunday after Easter, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> *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 xxxi (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxix (CIPBC 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 30:1-end (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 34:1-end (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 65:17-end (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> St. John 16:5-end (KJV).

<sup>7</sup> St. John 16:12-13 (KJV).

<sup>8</sup> From the movie "A Few Good Men", 1992, Castle Rock Entertainment.

<sup>9</sup> St. John 16:13 (KJV).

<sup>10</sup> St. John 16:13 (KJV).

<sup>11</sup> St. John 16:13 (KJV).

<sup>12</sup> Supply Priest, Holy Angels Anglican Mission, Picayune, MS, and Christ Anglican Catholic Pro-Church, Metairie, LA.

The loving-kindness of a God like that, a God who does understand what we are ready for—and what we are not prepared for—is part of the glorious reality of Who our Lord is. He knows what we can stand because he became one of us. He experienced our fears, our weaknesses, our inabilities.

And so our Lord promises to send the Holy Spirit to teach the disciples—and to teach us—all truth. That truth, Jesus promises, will come from the Father and the Son.

*“For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”*<sup>11</sup> The Holy Spirit will tell us what he knows from the Father and the Son, bringing us into the truth of God.

And, because God is possessed of all knowledge, of things past and to come, the Holy Spirit will show to the disciples the things that are yet to come. Those lessons will come as we are ready for them, we can remain assured. God will never give to us more than we can handle.

He will, however, give us those things that help us to grow, to expand, to become ever more inclusive and expressive of God’s love. It is as if God is being “age appropriate” with us, as those in the field of education like to say.

He knows what we are ready for, and gives us that. As we are ready for more, He gives us that additional information and knowledge, that we may use it to further understand, love, and worship Him.

We can but trust Him, and in time, when we are ready for it, we will hear the Holy Spirit say, “Now, you can handle the truth.”

Let us pray.

mine, and shall shew **[SHOW]** it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith **[SETH]**, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith **[SETH]**. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew **[SHOW]** you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye

might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

**Text:**

From the Second Lesson: “*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew [SHOW] you things to come.*”<sup>7</sup> In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Homily:**

Most of us remember that line in the movie, “A Few Good Men”, in which Jack Nicholson, playing the part of Colonel Nathan Jessup, loses his cool while testifying in the trial of two Marines for murder, yelling at Lieutenant Daniel Kaffee, played by Tom Cruise, “You can’t handle the truth!”<sup>8</sup>

While the scene was interesting, if unlikely—one wonders why the prodding of a lawyer in a courtroom would rattle an experienced Marine, used to facing far more deadly enemies, into admitting his guilt—it did point to a reality few of us like to admit. We all like to think we are rather mature and disciplined, ready to handle whatever life may throw at us.

Sometimes, however, there are truths we are simply not ready for. Jesus suggested that very same thing to His disciples as he prepared them for His Ascension into Heaven, telling them that while there remained many things He wished to tell them, they were not yet prepared for the full truth.

In the movie, Colonel Jessup is reduced to admitting all in a massive fit of hubris, but Jesus assures the disciples that the

Holy Ghost will continue to teach and guide them, and “*he will guide you into all truth.*”<sup>9</sup>

Why could the disciples not yet bear to hear the full truth? Perhaps their faith was simply not yet strong enough. Perhaps they had been shaken too deeply by the events of the Crucifixion to stand more devastating news without doing permanent damage to the Church. Perhaps they simply did not yet have the depth of experience and personal maturity to handle the realization of what their task truly entailed and the trials they would face.

Whatever the reason, Jesus, in His full knowledge of who the disciples were and what their abilities were, determined that they were not yet prepared and able to handle all the information involved. Because He knew they were not ready, He did not damage them or the Church by giving too much knowledge too soon.

In this case, however, that withholding of some knowledge was couched in the larger message that they would in time understand all that He had to say to them. Their greater understanding and ability to deal with the fuller truth would come as they were led by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus refers to the Holy Ghost here as “*the Spirit of truth*”<sup>10</sup> and says that Spirit of truth will guide the disciples “*into all truth.*” Not just the truths they might want to know, or those parts of truth that are comfortable and pleasant, but all truth.

Knowledge like that is a two-edged sword. It gives great influence and power, but also great and terrible responsibilities. Sometimes the truth is not pleasant. Sometimes the truth is dark and frightening, and involves knowing things with which we are not comfortable. Perhaps that is why Jesus knew His disciples were not yet ready for all that he wanted to tell them.