

**SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER**  
**The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity<sup>1</sup>**

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

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the eighteenth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.<sup>3</sup>

“The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith [SETH] the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

“Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith [SETH] the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. Therefore thus saith [SETH] the LORD; Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? Because my

people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up; To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will shew **[SHOW]** them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.”

*Or,*

Here beginneth the twenty-second Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.<sup>4</sup>

“Thus saith **[SETH]** the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates: Thus saith **[SETH]** the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith **[SETH]** the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation. For thus saith **[SETH]** the LORD unto the king’s house of Judah; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city? Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

“Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. For thus saith [SETH] the LORD touching Shallum [SHALL-umm] the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place; He shall not return thither any more: But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.

“Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; That saith [SETH], I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is cieled [SEALED] with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith [SETH] the LORD. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore thus saith [SETH] the LORD concerning Jehoiakim [*dgih-HOY-uh-kim*] the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the forty-sixth Verse of the eighth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.<sup>5</sup>

“... Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

“They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith **[SETH]** unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Jesus said, Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is noth-

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<sup>5</sup> St. John 31-end (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> St. John 8:46-47 (KJV).

<sup>7</sup> St. John 8:46 (KJV).

<sup>8</sup> St. John 8:46 (KJV).

<sup>9</sup> St. John 8:34 (KJV).

<sup>10</sup> St. John 8:37-38 (KJV).

<sup>11</sup> St. John 8:40 (KJV).

<sup>12</sup> St. John 8:44-45 (KJV).

<sup>13</sup> St. John 8:51 (KJV).

<sup>14</sup> St. John 8:56 (KJV).

<sup>15</sup> St. John 8:58 (KJV).

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 3:14 (KJV).

<sup>17</sup> Supply Priest, Holy Angels Anglican Catholic Mission, Picayune, MS, and Christ Church Anglican Catholic Pro-Cathedral Church, Metairie, LA.

structed, for Him to announce His own parity with God the Father, that is, to proclaim His divinity.

His hearers had been told they were sons of the devil, their evil had been pointed out to them and exposed. The reality of Who it was they were opposing had been proven before their very faces. But convinced that they were dealing with a madman, they took up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the Temple.

The battle lines were drawn, and had hardened. The final battle was about to begin. Just as during this confrontation at the Temple, Jesus' enemies would be unable to defeat Him. The final victory is His.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, as we near the commemoration of thy final battle with evil and sin, let us chose to stand by thy side. Let us remain assured that there is no sin, no error and no fault in thy teachings, and so remain faithful always to thy word and doctrine. Let us be thy faithful servants in the coming battle and always. For the sake of thy Name we pray. *Amen.*

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March 17, 2013

<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion on the Fifth Sunday in Lent, commonly called Passion Sunday, 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 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 xxxvi (CIPBC 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 18:1-17 (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 22:1-19 (KJV).

ing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you; but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

### **Text:**

From the Second Lesson: “*Jesus said, Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*”<sup>6</sup> In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

### **Homily:**

Sometimes the truth is not pleasant, and cannot be said in pleasant ways. Of course, telling people the truth, if that truth is sufficiently unpleasant, can also get you labeled as a madman. Our Lord clearly came to that point in today's Gospel, and as He dealt directly with the Pharisees and some of the Jews who did not follow Him just prior to His condemnation, He spoke very plainly and clearly to them about their fate.

Even then, however, some of them could not, or would not, understand Him and how they were condemning themselves. After Jesus stated to them plainly that they were sons, not of God, but of the devil, He directly questioned them: “*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*”<sup>7</sup> In other words, “Which one of you can prove that I have committed any sin, any error,

have proposed any false teaching, or have committed any blasphemy?”

The reality was that none of them could do so, for many had tried already, and more would soon, but no one had been or would be able to prove any error in any thing that Jesus did or taught. And Jesus took His truth to its logical end. *“If I say the truth, why do you not believe me?”*<sup>8</sup> The only possible answer then, and now, is that they could not convict Him of sin, because He had committed none, and they could not believe Him because they were, as He stated they were, sons of the devil.

Our Lord had stated the truth plainly to them: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”*<sup>9</sup> Jesus then granted that they who heard Him were of the lineage of Abraham, but that they had gone completely astray and had utterly abandoned God and all His works. *“I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.”*<sup>10</sup>

When the crowd answered that Abraham was their father, Jesus derided their claim, noting that if they truly were the spiritual children of Abraham, they would do the works of Abraham. *“But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.”*<sup>11</sup> Nor did Jesus leave them there.

He went further, to point out why they acted as they did: *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.”*<sup>12</sup>

Our Lord had clearly no more time for pretense or gentle words for the children of evil, who even as they spoke, were

planning on how to kill Him. But these sad people could not even imagine the reality of Who it was against Whom they were facing off. They assumed that He was just like them, limited to the reality of human existence, trapped in time and place. If they were outraged that Jesus had called them out as liars, they were to be even more upset at His coming claim.

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”*<sup>13</sup> This claim utterly scandalized the Jews, because in it, Jesus was clearly stating that He was greater than the revered Abraham, who was regarded as the father of all the Jews. The reaction of the Pharisees and the people was swift: *“Now we know that you have a devil,”* they said. *“Abraham is dead, and the rest of the prophets as well.”* Yet, Jesus had just said that if a man keep His sayings, he would never die.

*“Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead,”* they asked? Jesus tried once yet again to explain the truth to the crowd, but they would not listen. *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”*<sup>14</sup> The implication is clear. Jesus was telling the crowd that He was the very Son of God, and that He has exists outside of time. Abraham was glad to see the time of Christ, because Christ was in the time of Abraham as He was speaking to the crowd, and as He still is today.

The crowd was befuddled. They could not comprehend that this wandering preacher, the son of a carpenter in Galilee, could be God. *“Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?”* And Jesus said to them, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”*<sup>15</sup>

This was more than the crowd could take, for “I AM” is the Name God had given to Moses when the patriarch demanded to know with whom he was conversing.<sup>16</sup> Thus for Jesus to say, in effect, “I am ‘I AM’” was, to the Scripturally in-