

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER
The Eighth Sunday after Trinity¹
(Year II)

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the twenty-first Verse of the the thirty-third Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel.³

“And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith [SETH] the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour’s wife: and shall ye possess the land? Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith [SETH] the Lord GOD; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.

“Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh

forth from the LORD. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew [SHOW] much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the fifth Verse of the sixteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.⁴

“... 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.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: *“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,*

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The Rev'd Larry Wagoner, MSW⁷
April 21, 2013

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion on the Third Sunday after Easter, 2013.

² *The Table of Lessons*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxv (Anglican Church of Canada 1962).

³ Ezekiel 33:21-end (KJV).

⁴ St. John 16:16-22 (KJV).

⁵ St. John 16:21-22 (KJV).

⁶ St. John 16:22 (KJV).

⁷ Supply Priest, Holy Angels Anglican Mission, Picayune, MS, and Christ Anglican Catholic Pro-Cathedral Church, Metairie, LA.

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.”⁵ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

Are you willing to work now, perhaps even to suffer now, for a reward you will receive later? Sometimes, it is difficult for us to keep in mind a later benefit when the work or cost directly in front of us seems too large.

We may then become afraid to take on a large task, because the benefit from that task seems too remote to focus on. When we lose sight of the eventual reward for our labors, we lose motivation. This is why the old song urges that we “keep our eyes on the prize,” for only by remaining focused on the “prize”—the eventual outcome and reward—can we remain motivated and driven to achieve and to stay focused on what we must do. In the mental health fields we call this “delayed gratification”, and it is one of the measures of maturity.

Young children often cannot maintain the longer-term view and stay focused on tasks in the here and now as is required to obtain benefit in the future. For them, the future seems too remote and too unsure to be a sufficient reward. Their ability to trust that the reward will come is not able to overcome their aversion to the work needed now.

Many of our current problems in society can be traced to this type of short-sightedness. If we have a problem in a relationship, we throw away the relationship rather than investing the work to fix what is wrong and make things work. Whether a friendship, or a marriage, the response is the same. No wonder that today in this country, almost half of all marriages fail.

Indeed, the marriage that lasts beyond a few years is viewed as an oddity, and one that lasts beyond 20 years or so is

rapidly becoming unheard of. The reality, that the longer-term benefit of repairing, strengthening, and reinforcing the marriage is of more value than the short-term avoidance of pain or effort, never even gets considered. Jobs are no longer a lifetime commitment, as both corporations and workers no longer feel bound by the bonds of loyalty to work together in mutual respect.

Even family, the most basic of human relationships, is under attack from without and within. Faced with the expense and work of raising a family, tens of thousands of people a year turn to the bloody expedient of abortion. They cannot fathom that the reward of a family is worth so much more in the long term than the temporary inconvenience of a birth.

In our news during this past week, as it has highlighted the murder trial of an abortion doctor in Philadelphia who is charged with slaughtering seven babies who were born alive, we have watched in horror as the realities of this quite literal holocaust are brought to light. It is often said that we live in a “throw-away society”, and it is true, but we are throwing away our selves and our own bonds to one another, and our humanity in the process.

Our Lord urges us to remain dedicated to the long-term benefits of a life with Him, despite the short-term costs and struggles that doing so will entail. He told His disciples to remain firm, despite their fears, concerns about their lives and the challenges that faced them. The reward, He said, was “joy no man taketh from you.”⁶

The travails of the current world are real. There are costs inherent in how we live our lives. But the rewards, when we stay faithful to Him and to His will for our lives, is joy beyond measure and which no one can take from us. That is the reward for remaining true.

Jesus provided the ultimate example for us in His own life and death. He remained true to the Father’s plan for

achieve forgiveness and salvation for us, submitting Himself to live as one of us, then even submitting Himself to being viciously treated by men in spite of His innocence and even submitting Himself to death on the Cross.

If He can wait and persevere through the events of His Passion and death in order to achieve an end He desired for us, then we are faced with the question of whether we can wait and persevere through our lives in a manner that allows us to be with God throughout eternity. Can we remain faithful in order to remain God’s own?

That is the value of waiting through what might be tough and troubling times now in order to achieve something far greater in a time to come. Not only can the greatest joy possible be ours, but it can be beyond the ability of any man to take from us.

As we are tempted from time to time by the various offerings of the world, we need to ask ourselves the longer-term questions. We need to be mindful of the competing demands on our time, our loyalty and our lives. Will we abandon God’s plan in order to earn temporary reward from men and the world, or will we stay faithful to God’s plan regardless of the costs of doing so in terms of the world?

Can you wait until later to receive your reward?

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, let us not be distracted by the meaningless and shallow diversions of the world. Instead, let us remain always fixed on You and Your Kingdom, remaining faithful always to Your ways. We know that the rewards of the world are of little value and last only a brief time. Let us remain always determined instead to achieve eternal reward with You. This we ask through the glorious Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.