

**SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER<sup>1</sup>**  
**The Third Sunday in Lent<sup>2</sup>**

**Lessons:<sup>3</sup>**

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the fourth Verse of the fifth Chapter of Amos.<sup>4</sup>

“For thus saith [SETH] the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live: But seek not Beth-el [BETH-ull], nor enter into Gilgal [GILL-gal], and pass not to Beer-sheba [BEA-air-SHE-buh]: for Gilgal [GILL-gal] shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el [BETH-ull] shall come to nought. Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel [BETH-ull]. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name: That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the sixteenth Verse of the fifth Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Galatians.<sup>5</sup>

“... This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

**Text:**

From the Second Lesson: “*I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*”<sup>6</sup> In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Homily:**

The destined end of man is holiness. It is for this that the Father has recreated us in Christ. In 1 Peter 1:16, Christians are commanded: “*Be ye holy; for I am holy.*” St. Peter is quoting from Leviticus 11:44, where God warned the Israelites to stay away from those things which would defile them and make them unholy.

Jesus gave all of Himself, dying for our sins. And so we now are, by grace, to die to ourselves, to live as those who know “I am not my own”, and to give all we are to Jesus for His exclusive use and glory.

As we do we will reach our destined end and what the Father has recreated us in Christ for: holiness. *Amen.*

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The Rev’d Paul T. Beutell, II<sup>7</sup>  
September 9, 2012

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<sup>1</sup> “Any set of Psalms and Lessons appointed for the evening of any day may be read at the morning service, and any set of morning Psalms and Lessons may be read in the evening.” *Concerning the Service of the Church*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER viii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

<sup>2</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Epistle for Holy Communion on the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xix (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

<sup>4</sup> Amos 5:4-15 (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> Galatians 5:16-24 (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> Galatians 5:16 (KJV).

<sup>7</sup> Rector, St. Thomas of Canterbury Anglican Catholic Church, Roanoke, Virginia.

ness is faultless and blameless walking with the feet, talking with the tongue, and thinking with the mind. It means being set apart in thought, word and deed for God's exclusive use.

Again, this is not something just for "special Christians!" By our baptism, each of us has been called to be a disciple of Jesus, and in our confirmation each of us has accepted the call to be a disciple of Jesus. Disciples of Jesus must be holy as Jesus is holy. Jesus was set apart for the Father's exclusive use. He was the spotless Lamb of God who was set apart to take away the sins of the world to take away *our* sins.

As disciples of Jesus we, too, are called to be set apart for God's exclusive use. Not to take away the sins of the world but to live and proclaim to everyone the Good News that *Jesus* has taken away the sins of the world.

We are to use all the Father has made us to be and given us for our use to glorify Jesus Christ. We are by grace to strive and abandon ourselves totally to Christ, by battling against anything and everything that prevents us from being holy.

This is a challenge to be sure. It takes our full time and attention all day, every day of our lives. But then the salvation God promises us in Christ will be all day, every day for all eternity.

Today's Second Lesson ends with these words: "...*they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.*" Holiness means no longer surrendering to "*works of the flesh*" like the ones St. Paul lists in the Lesson, because if we do so surrender we "*shall not enter the kingdom of God.*", never mind be a holy disciple of Jesus.

Instead we must live lives that produce the "...*fruit of the Spirit...*" This is the substance of the life of a holy disciple of Jesus. Let us note the stark contrast between the two and not be deceived into compromise.

In spite of God's plain commands, we place any number of ends before holiness: our own happiness, health, peace, prosperity, *etc.* In themselves, none of those other ends are bad. None of them are evil. They are not bad or evil, that is, as long as they come second to holiness and don't block or obscure our path to it.

Ultimately, there is only one thing that *really* matters in life, and that is for every person, by grace through faith, to receive the God (Jesus Christ) Who can, Who does, and Who will make them holy.

At all costs, every person, each woman and man, must be rightly related to God in this way. We have to receive Christ as Savior and Lord, and then as Lord, we have to submit to His Holy Spirit, and we have to and allow Him to make us holy.

What is "holiness?" What does being "*holy*" mean? The Greek word translated into English as "holy" is *hagios* [**uh-GUY-oss**] which means "*set apart.*" *Hagios* [**uh-GUY-oss**] was the word used for the altar sacrifices. They were "set apart" for the purpose of sacrifice.

The theological definition of holiness is: "...*the devotion and purity of life associated with Christian discipleship, in which one lives according to God's will and exhibits that commitment in all areas of behavior.*"

A holy person is someone who, in receiving Christ as Savior, is set apart for God's exclusive use, and utilizes the grace he or she is given to live life according to God's Word, and to demonstrate that commitment in all areas of his or her behavior. A holy person is one who is committed to being a disciple of Jesus Christ in every area of life: in thought, word and deed.

A holy person is one who has reached the realization "I am not my own, I belong exclusively to Jesus Christ for His use

and His glory.” Holiness is not just for “special Christians.” Each of us is called by Baptism, and even more so in Confirmation, to be holy disciples of Jesus. In fact, there can be no such thing as an “unholy disciple”.

While all disciples struggle to demonstrate the necessary commitment to be holy in *every* area of life, by grace they strive daily to overcome whatever obscures their path. This struggle may take place throughout their entire lives, but so long as they continue by grace to strive and not give up, Jesus will continue to receive them among His disciples.

Our Lord’s standard for His disciples is not perfection. He knows we are sinners who will fall short on occasion. His standard is *total* abandonment and *daily* striving. If we are not willing to commit by faith to both of those, we will not be holy (set apart) and cannot be numbered among His disciples.

Do we believe we need to be holy? Do we believe God can really come into our lives and make us holy?

In my preaching, I am called to convince you (and myself), that as baptized Christian-disciples of Jesus Christ, we *must* become and be holy. Does that type of preaching cause resentment in your spirit? If it does, that is not a bad thing, depending on what you do with it.

The preaching of the Gospel will often awaken an intense resentment because it reveals to us who we truly are. I may call myself a disciple, and yet I’m not living up to Jesus’ standard for a disciple with *total* abandonment and *daily* striving. Instead, I’ve created my own personal definition of discipleship, one that is comfortable for my conscience and doesn’t offer any challenge to it.

Instead of taking head on and by grace the sins that block my path to true discipleship, I deceive myself into believ-

ing I can be a true disciple *with* sin in my life, or redefine what sin is and deceive myself.

If the resentment we feel in our spirit when we hear the Gospel preached creates that reaction, we are off track. But if the resentment we feel motivates us into action, action (again always by grace) to take the sin blocking our paths to true discipleship head on, then that is a good thing.

Hebrews 4:12 states “...*the word of God is quick (living) and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner (a judge) of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” In the life of a disciple of Jesus, God’s Word convicts, challenges, instructs and directs us how to live as true disciples.

It shows us what total abandonment and daily striving look like in the life of a true disciple. It leads us to see and know that “I am not my own.” St. James 1:23, 24 states “*For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass (a mirror); For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*”

St. James is saying Scripture is a mirror that shows us what a disciple of Jesus looks like. What do we see when we look into that mirror? Or, how many times as we read Scripture do we understand who we are to be and at that moment become motivated and committed to striving to be what we are called to be, but then, as soon as our Bible has been put away, we go right back to our unholy ways?

Too many times in my life, for sure. But it need not be that way, certainly not from this day forward! And it won’t be that way if we stop tolerating sympathy and excuses for ourselves for not striving to be holy! We can never tolerate any practice that is not in keeping with the holiness of God. Holi-