

Sermon for Morning Prayer
The Seventh Sunday After Trinity

Lessons:¹

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the fourteenth Chapter of Hosea.²

“O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim [**EE-free-um**] shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the twelfth Verse of the sixth Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Romans.³

“. . . Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from

the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”⁴ In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Introduction:

The ultimate purpose of our religion is to bring us closer to God, so close, indeed, that if it is possible, finally to bring us into union with God. Anything that separates us from God is therefore vitally important to our relationship to Him.

So it is very worth our while to examine just what it is that can interfere with our relationship with God, that is, that can separate us from Him. Today it is fashionable to discuss and analyze human behavior, human problems, and human social issues in terms of “models”.

But God Himself has given us the means to be with Him and in Him. The willful disobedience of our first parents is overcome by our willing obedience to God, as He has revealed Himself to us in His Son: “Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”.¹⁸

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August 2, 1987.

¹ *Psalms and Lessons for the Church Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER x (PECUSA 1928/1943).

² Hosea 14: 1-9 (KJV).

³ Romans 6: 12-18 (KJV).

⁴ Romans 6: 16 (KJV).

⁵ Genesis 3: 1-19.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Genesis 3: 3.

⁸ Genesis 3: 7.

⁹ Genesis 3: 8.

¹⁰ Genesis 3: 1-19.

¹¹ Genesis 3: 23-24.

¹² St. Matthew 1: 21 (KJV).

¹³ St. Luke 24: 46b-47a (KJV).

¹⁴ St. John 3: 17 (KJV).

¹⁵ I Timothy 1: 15b (KJV).

¹⁶ Hebrews 9: 26b (KJV); cf. Romans 5: 14-15.

¹⁷ Romans 6: 16 (KJV).

¹⁸ Hebrews 5: 9 (KJV).

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Theme:

The Bible gives us a number of models to explain the operation and effect of sin and the solution to sin. One of these is the story of the “Fall of Man” set out in Genesis⁵ as the paradigm of the nature and effect of sin. Another is the story of Christ’s life and ministry set out in the four Gospels as the paradigm of the solution God offers to us to cure us from sin and from sin’s effects.

Development:

1. Sin is essentially disobedience of God’s will for us.

In the third Chapter of the Book of Genesis, we are given the ancient Hebrews’ account of mankind’s “Fall from Grace”.⁶ The essence of that Fall was Adam and Eve’s deliberate disobedience of God’s express command that they should not eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,⁷ *i.e.*, that they should continue to live in a state of innocence, depending in faith on God for all that they needed.

Adam and Eve frustrated God’s plan for them – and for us – by disobeying Him. With the new form of knowledge they thus illicitly acquired, they began to depend on themselves for what they needed, rather than on God. Thus they were not satisfied with God’s regulation of the weather, but made themselves clothes,⁸ which were symbolic of their new independence from God. Similarly, instead of going out to meet God, as they had formerly done when He appeared, they hid themselves from Him.⁹

Thus Adam and Eve laid down the basic pattern of all human sin: our deliberate disobedience toward God.

2. Sin separates us from God.

If the nature of sin is our disobedience of God, then it should be no surprise that its principal effect is to separate us from God. We see a microcosm of that whenever our children, or employees, or subordinates deliberately disobey us: the initial result is always the creation of tension in our relationship with the one who disobeys.

In Genesis's account of mankind's "Fall from Grace",¹⁰ even the language of that familiar phrase is significant. "Grace" comes from the Latin, *gratia*, meaning "gift". As we use this term, "the gift", in Christianity, what we are talking about is God's presence with us.

In other words, when our relationship with God is what it is supposed to be, God gives us the gift of His presence. Not surprisingly, therefore, when our relationship with God is not what it is supposed to be, God withdraws His presence from us.

That is the point of Genesis's account of our first parents' disobedience toward God. Prior to their disobedience, Adam and Eve dwelt in God's chosen place, as God's children, in His presence, and in complete amity with Him. After their disobedience of a fundamental command of God, they no longer dwelt in God's chosen place for them, nor in His presence, nor were they in amity with Him.¹¹

The lesson of the first great sin is clear: the effect of sin is to separate us from God.

3. Christ is the solution to our inborn tendency to sin.

One way of looking at the Old Testament is as the long, continued story of God's care for mankind despite mankind's first sin and separation from Him. The most im-

portant aspect of this care throughout the Old Testament period was God's development of, and preservation of, the Hebrew people as a nation and as a state.

From this same perspective, the New Testament is then the story of how, after the Jewish people had become sufficiently instructed and trained to understand what God was doing, He intervened in their history to provide them, again as *gratia* or a free gift, with the means of overcoming the initial sin that had separated Adam and Eve, and therefore Adam and Eve's descendents, from God.

Several key passages tell us expressly that Christ came to save us from the bonds of sin:

"For he shall save his people from their sins."¹²

"Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day; And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations...."¹³

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."¹⁴

But the clearest and most unmistakable expressions of this principle are: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"¹⁵ and "in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."¹⁶

Conclusion:

As our text for today says, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"¹⁷ This might be rendered in more colloquial terms as, "Those who are not with God are against Him."