

**SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER**  
**The Ninth Sunday after Trinity**

**Lessons:**<sup>1</sup>

**Psalm:** The portion of the Psalter appointed for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity is Psalm number 103, which is found on page 466 of the Book of Common Prayer:

**P**RAISE the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, praise his holy Name.

2 Praise the LORD, O my soul, \* and forget not all his benefits:

3 Who forgiveth all thy sin, \* and healeth all thine infirmities;

4 Who saveth thy life from destruction, \* and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness;

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, \* making thee young and lusty as an eagle.

6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment \* for all them that are oppressed with wrong.

7 He showed his ways unto Moses, \* his works unto the children of Israel.

8 The LORD is full of compassion and mercy, \* long-suffering, and of great goodness.

9 He will not always be chiding; \* neither keepeth he his anger for ever.

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; \* nor rewarded us according to our wickednesses.

11 For look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth; \* so great is his mercy also toward them that fear him.

12 Look how wide also the east is from the west; \* so far hath he set our sins from us.

13 Yea, like as a father pitieth his own children; \* even so is the LORD merciful unto them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth whereof we are made; \* he remembereth that we are but dust.

15 The days of man are but as grass; \* for he flourisheth as a flower of the field.

16 For as soon as the wind goeth over it, it is gone; \* and the place thereof shall know it no more.

17 But the merciful goodness of the LORD endureth for ever and ever upon them that fear him; \* and his righteousness upon children's children;

18 Even upon such as keep his covenant, \* and think upon his commandments to do them.

19 The LORD hath prepared his seat in heaven, \* and his kingdom ruleth over all.

20 O praise the LORD, ye angels of his, ye that excel in strength; \* ye that fulfil his commandment, and hearken unto the voice of his word.

21 O praise the LORD, all ye his hosts; \* ye servants of his that do his pleasure.

22 O speak good of the LORD, all ye works of his, in all places of his dominion: \* praise thou the LORD, O my soul.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, \* and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, \* world without end. Amen.

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the twenty-first Verse of the eleventh Chapter of the Wisdom of Solomon.<sup>2</sup>

“. . . For thou canst shew [SHOW] thy great strength at all times when thou wilt; and who may withstand the power of

thine arm? For the whole world before thee is as a little grain of the balance, yea, as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth. But thou hast mercy upon all; for thou canst do all things, and winkest at the sins of men, because they should amend. For thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made: for never wouldest thou have made any thing, if thou hadst hated it. And how could any thing have endured, if it had not been thy will? or been preserved, if not called by thee? But thou sparest all: for they are thine, O Lord, thou lover of souls. For thine incorruptible Spirit is in all things. Therefore chastenest thou them by little and little that offend, and warnest them by putting them in remembrance wherein they have offended, that leaving their wickedness they may believe on thee, O Lord.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the eighth Chapter of the Gospel According to St. John.<sup>3</sup>

“Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned:<sup>4</sup> but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none

but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

**Homily:**

All three of today’s readings teach of God’s mercy and forgiveness. The reading from The Wisdom of Solomon speaks of God’s *infinite* power . . . but praises Him for tempering that power with mercy: “For thou canst shew [SHOW] thy great strength at all times when thou wilt; and who may withstand the power of thine arm? For the whole world before thee is as a little grain of the balance, yea, as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth. But thou hast mercy upon all . . . For thine incorruptible Spirit is in all things. Therefore chasteneth thou them by little and little that offend, and warnest them by putting them in remembrance wherein they have offended, that leaving their wickedness they may believe on thee, O Lord.”

Psalm 103, one of the truly beautiful Psalms, praises the LORD over and over for His mercy:

“Praise the LORD, O my soul; \* and all that is within me, praise his holy Name.

. . .

3 Who forgiveth all thy sin, and healeth all thine infirmities;

4 Who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness;

. . .

8 The LORD is full of compassion and mercy, longsuffering, and of great goodness.

clearly has said is wrong. Jesus demonstrated great *inclusiveness* for all people—but equally great *intolerance* of their—and *our*—sins. That is our duty as well.

“Praise the LORD, O my soul; Who forgiveth all thy sin, and healeth all thine infirmities; Who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness.”

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The Rev’d John S. Longcamp, MD<sup>7</sup>  
August 5, 2012

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<sup>1</sup> *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxx (PECUSA 1928/1943).

<sup>2</sup> *Wisdom* 11:21--12:2 (KJV).

<sup>3</sup> St. John 8:1-11 (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22.

<sup>5</sup> Vincent Capozzella: Why all the hate?

<http://www.summitdaily.com/article/20120714/COLUMNS/120719932&parentprofile=search>

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 5:20.

<sup>7</sup> Vicar, St. Dunstan’s Anglican Church (APA), Dillon, CO.

It is interesting to note that most of the counselors at the Women's Resource Center are evangelical Christians, the very people so scathingly denounced in the newspaper column. Financial supporters, as well as members of the Board of Directors, also include Roman Catholics, Missouri Synod Lutherans, and Anglicans.

The writer's list of targets of so-called "haters" goes on to include "people who support . . . gay marriage and gay rights." Again, in the vast majority of cases, he is dead wrong. Christian opposition to so-called "gay marriage" is not based on hatred of people because of the objects of their sexual attraction, but because the notion of same-sex marriage is detrimental to the individual and society, for it is an inferior and inadequate counterfeit of the real thing envisioned for mankind by God himself.

Such a union is inferior and inadequate because God intended a much more beautiful union of two incomplete—yet physically and emotionally complimentary—individuals who would become a family, endowed with the potential of producing and rearing children within that union. And that family would provide both male and female role models for their healthy development. Such a family is also the ideal setting for children to learn of God's love and His Gospel.

Our message to take home today is that, just as Jesus did, we are to oppose sin without hating, or humiliating, or rejecting our fellow sinners. Most gay activists insist that this is impossible. But Jesus demonstrates that it can be done, and He expects us to follow His example. And many parents, many friends, and I can attest that, with God's help, it is possible.

At the same time, we must not act as if sin did not matter, for Isaiah wrote: "Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness."<sup>6</sup> That is, we must *not* follow society in declaring *good* what God

. . .  
10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins;  
nor rewarded us according to our wickednesses.  
. . .  
21 O praise the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye  
servants of his that do his pleasure.  
22 . . . [P]raise thou the LORD, O my soul."

John, however, gets specific in his Gospel. He tells of a woman caught flagrantly in the act of adultery and makes it clear that while He hates her sin, Jesus has only love and mercy for her. There are several possible lessons for us from this story. For one, she is not the only sinner, for when confronted by Jesus, every man in this crowd that would stone her slinks away, newly convicted of his own sins. Or there is the hypocrisy of their application of Jewish Law that would stone an adulteress while ignoring the equally guilty man.

But the message that permeates all three readings is that of pure mercy—of a God who withholds His mighty hand. He has the power; He has the authority; and He would be justified, if He exacted—or permitted—the punishment the crowd is so eager to inflict on this undoubtedly terrified adulteress.

The Law God gave to Moses is clear, and by it this woman deserves to die—and, having been brought to these vengeful Scribes and Pharisees, surely she must expect to be stoned. But Jesus, in this encounter, shows us how to separate sin from sinner. It is sin God hates. But us sinners He loves. It is sin that God wants to destroy. It is sinners He wants to save.

And He accomplishes this seeming paradox in the person of God the Son when he takes all our sins upon Himself on the Cross and takes them away with His death. Sin is destroyed. Sinners are saved.

Can we begin to imagine how this woman must feel as she watches the crowd walk away, leaving her alone with Jesus? She will not endure the miserable death she had anticipated only moments before. But what will this man Jesus, who has just saved her life, do? Does he hate her? Will He humiliate her with scathing remarks about her sinful act?

When Jesus, who had been squatting down, writing in the sand as if distracted, stood up, He asked, “Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?” When she answered, “No man, Lord,” Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

Perhaps she was bewildered at first. Was she really free to go? . . . as if she had never sinned? Once this had sunk in, her relief and joy must have been overwhelming. As *ours* should be, for this is the Gospel’s message for us as well. But Jesus’ parting words to her also are for us: “Go, and sin no more.” This we call amendment of life, our grateful response for the gift of grace in the forgiveness of our sins.

We are assured of that forgiveness every time we confess our sin here at Morning Prayer. And, when we confess and also receive the Body and Blood of Christ at Holy Communion, that forgiveness is even more impressed on our minds and hearts by the experience of receiving the Body and Blood of Him who died for us.

But there is more for us for us to learn from this encounter, for it also serves as an example for us as to how we should treat our fellow sinners. Jesus was careful to separate the sin and the sinner. So must we do.

There is, however, a tendency in our culture to link sin and sinner—or hatred of sin and hatred of the sinner—in a way that goes against what Jesus teaches. At times, Christians—at least people who claim to be Christians—do just that. I am

thinking of the Westboro Baptist Church, for example, whose members do respond with hate by disrupting the funerals of U.S. servicemen in their misguided reaction against homosexuality.

This has led to the vitriolic column that appeared in the *Summit Daily News* three weeks ago.<sup>5</sup> Titled, “Why all the hate?”, this column proceeded to say that all sorts of groups *hated* those they disagreed with, or whose actions they spoke out against. This rant culminated in a bitter attack on evangelical Christians:

“The most amazing hatred is by a group who loudly and proudly proclaim their love of God. Yep, the evangelical Christians who profess to following the preaching of Jesus Christ. They love everyone except: gays, women who have had abortions, doctors who perform abortions, atheists, women who use contraception, Muslims, non-evangelicals, Scientologists and people who support health care, gay marriage and gay rights.”

We must never provide credence to such charges by equating the sinner with the sin. Rather, we should be ready to point out examples of proper Christian responses to the sin that does, indeed, permeate our society today.

For example, the local Women’s Resource Center of the Rockies works to reduce abortion, and it does so through non-judgmental education and support for women and couples facing unintended pregnancies. More importantly, it also provides counseling and support for women—preferably for couples—who have already had abortions and who now are having to deal with the emotional and physical consequences of abortion. There is no condemnation—no hatred—of these women. Unsaid, but implied by the loving support of this group, is, “Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more.