

SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER
The Third Sunday after Trinity

The Rev. Warren E. Shaw, Priest-in-Charge

Lessons:¹

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the ninth Chapter of the First Book of Moses, called Genesis.²

“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

“And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and

every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the seventeenth Verse of the third Chapter of the First Epistle General of St. Peter.³

“... For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”

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

² Genesis 9:1-17 (KJV).

³ I St. Peter 3:17—4:6 (KJV).

⁴ Genesis 9:3-5a (RSV).

when the laws of men conflict with the laws of God that are written in the hearts of men and in the annals of nature.

Slavery once was legal but it violated natural law, and, in time, fell before the weight of it. Abortion may be legal today, but it is already showing signs of falling under the weight of natural law. Homosexual unions are legal in many places, but they also violate natural law. No-fault divorce may be legal but it likewise violates natural law and will one day fall beneath the weight of it. The story of Noah teaches us that God is patient, but He will not be mocked forever.

Friedrich von Logau was a 17th Century German poet. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow translates his words as follows: “The mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.” “Though with patience he stands waiting, with exactness grinds he all.”

Brethren, let us pray for the day when all man-made laws will strengthen rather than conflict with natural law. Let us pray for that day to come quickly before the consequences of present trends play themselves out in more damage to the world that God made. Let us pray.

“O God, who has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth, and didst send thy blessed Son to preach peace to them that are far off and to them that are nigh; Grant that all men everywhere may seek after thee and find thee. Bring the nations into thy fold, pour out thy Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten thy kingdom: through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.”

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St. David's Anglican Catholic Church
Charlottesville, Virginia

July 10, 2011

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning...”⁴ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Homily:

Before the Ten Commandments, there was what we call “natural law”. Jesus recognizes that priority in responding to the question about divorce. The book of Deuteronomy says that a man may put his wife out of the house if she brings shame upon him, but he must give her a written release so that she can be married to another man. In St. Matthew Jesus says, “For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.”

The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church gives this quotation from St. Thomas Aquinas: “Natural law is nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God; through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid. God has given us this light or law at the creation.”

The Catechism goes on to say: “The natural law, present in the heart of each man and established by reason, is universal in its precepts and its authority extends to all men.” And it goes on to say: “The natural law is immutable and permanent... Even when it is rejected in its very principles, it cannot be destroyed or removed from the hearts of men. It always rises again in the life of individuals and societies.”

I don't know about you, but I find that reassuring in the decadent society of our time with its pedophilia, bestiality, abortion, and total redefinition of marriage. The Roman Catholic Church may be wrong about a lot of things, but it's not wrong about everything.

In the Garden of Eden, God laid out certain principles of natural law. The first was reproduction: "Be fruitful and multiply." The second was Human dominion over nature: "Cover the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." We are to oversee and care for nature; not worship it.

The third principle of natural law laid out in Eden was to eat fruits and vegetables: "I have given you every plant yielding seed ... And every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food."

And then there was one final commandment. Stay away from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Don't try to define good and evil for yourselves.

Well, as you know, our first human ancestors were glad to obey all of those laws except the last one. It seems as though natural law is okay as long as we don't find it too restrictive.

But there are consequences to disobeying God's laws, and as those consequences played themselves out over time, God decided He had to put a stop what was going on. He removed His hand from holding back the waters of chaos and allowed the creation to return to its primordial state. He made a new beginning with one righteous man and that man's family. But even then the first two principles of natural law remained in effect. Noah took his wife and his sons and their wives into the ark with him so that the human race could continue to be fruitful and multiply. He also took a mating pair of every animal with him in fulfillment of the command to oversee and protect the lower species.

But one principle of natural law was changed. The human diet was no longer to be a vegetarian one. With certain restrictions, animals could be killed and eaten as well. The restrictions are significant. The blood that sustains the life of animals represents the life itself, and that belongs to God. The animals were not to be strangled or suffocated. They were to be slaughtered in a way that allowed the blood escape. Man was entitled to what remained of the animal after the life, which was equated with the blood, was returned to God.

And so it was that the first Apostolic Council decreed that, while Gentile converts were not bound by Jewish dietary laws, they were bound by natural law as revealed to Noah. They were to refrain from idols, from unchastity, and from what has been strangled and from blood. You can look that up in Acts chapter 15.

There was also an addition to the natural law that was given to Noah. When Cain killed his brother Abel, God said, "His blood cries out to me from the ground." And God took it upon Himself to punish Cain. After the Flood, God said to Noah, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." God turned the administration of justice in murder cases over to human society with the stipulation that death was the proper penalty.

Natural law provides the foundation upon which both civil and criminal law build. When such laws are consistent with natural law, those laws command the respect of everyone. But man-made laws that conflict with natural law can only be enforced by the excessive use of power, and that invites rebellion.

In a sense, this country was founded on natural law. The Declaration of Independence says that "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are gifts of God and the purpose of government is to sustain and enhance those rights. That is essentially an argument based on natural law. Jefferson goes on to say that when governments deny or interfere with the operation of that natural law, the people have a right to rebel. And so they did. And so people continue to rebel throughout the world. And so they will always rebel