

That is part of His nature. “If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.”

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St. David’s Anglican Church
Charlottesville, Virginia

July 11, 2010

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

² Isaiah 57: 13b-19 (KJV).

³ Timothy 2: 7-13 (KJV).

⁴ II Timothy 2: 13 (RSV).

**Sermon for Morning Prayer
The Sixth Sunday after Trinity**

The Reverend Warren E. Shaw, Priest Associate

Lessons:¹

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the thirteenth Verse of the fifty-seventh Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.²

“... [H]e that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the seventh Verse of the second Chapter of the Second Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to Timothy.³

“... Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead

with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text: “If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.”⁴

Homily:

The one thing God cannot do is stop being God. Even when He entered into human flesh, He did not take upon Himself the fallen nature of man. He became the new Adam, without sin, the pure and untarnished expression in flesh of the nature of the divine nature.

There is really no inherent inconsistency, you see, between human nature and divine nature. The only inconsistency is sin, which is not essential to humanity. Sin is an alien force, an infection, as it were, that has invaded and occupied human nature from the outside. A sinless man would be a God-man, which is what Jesus has been called.

The church has always taught that Jesus is the perfect revelation of God. He is “the image of the invisible God”. He Himself says, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” It is through the Son that we have access to the Father as well as knowledge of the Father. But Jesus is also the perfect revelation of human nature as God created it and intends it to be once again. SO what does God show us in Jesus about Himself and about His will for us?

Well, for one thing, Jesus reveals God’s power over the material universe. You will recall that He was able to still a raging storm at sea, and to walk upon water, and to cure disease, and to turn water in to wine, and to rise from the dead. That’s entirely consistent with what we see in the Old Testament, when God calls

the physical universe into being and forms man out the earth and sends droughts and famines and floods as well as rain and sunlight, and opens the Red Sea to allow His people to escape from the Egyptians. God is revealed throughout the Bible, not as part of nature, or even as the whole of nature, but as the Lord and master of nature. God can exist without the physical universe, but the physical universe cannot exist without God.

And Jesus tells us that we too were created and are ultimately destined to “have dominion” as Genesis puts it, over the physical universe. “He who believes in me,” He says, “also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do because I go to the Father.”

It is because God intends for us to be like Him that He makes hard demands upon us. He says in Leviticus, “You shall be holy because I, the Lord Your God, am holy.” In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus lays out requirements that go even beyond what the Ten Commandments require. “You must be perfect,” He says, “because God is perfect.”

Jesus demonstrates the special concern that God has for the poor and for the outcast. Just as God chose a group of wandering herdsmen to be His special people, so Jesus constantly associates with the kind of people that nobody else wants to have anything to do with. He chose tradesmen and tax collectors rather than men of prestige to be His apostles, and He says, “In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.”

But the one essential thing that Jesus reveals about God that is different about us, is that God is always faithful, and we are not. The mark of the cross that is placed on our foreheads in baptism can never be removed. We can sin, and we do. We can renounce God entirely, as some people do. We can betray Him and follow after other gods, as many people have done and as Israel often did. But God remains committed to us. He disciplines us. He punishes us. But he never stops loving us and He is always ready to forgive.