

SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER
The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Lessons:¹

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the eighth Chapter of Zechariah.²

“Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith [SETH] the Lord of hosts. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

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“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

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

“... For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts.”

angry with others. It is easy to reject others. But that is precisely what we must not do.

We are part of the Body of Christ. We are called to forgive. We are called to care for others. We are called to teach, to heal and to feed. We are called to love others. That is what the body of Christ does.

Let us pray:

Lord, help us to understand your call to us to serve others as Your blessed Son has taught us. Help us to teach, to guide, to heal and to feed Your people. Give us the grace to follow You in all things. As we are parts of Your Body, we know that in Your time we will understand those things now unclear to us. Amen.

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

² Zechariah 8: 1-8, 20-23 (KJV).

³ I Corinthians 12: 12-31a (KJV).

⁴ I Corinthians 12:12-31a (KJV).

⁵ St. Matthew 3:16-17.

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Think of it: He created us and all that we know. He permitted us the freedom that allowed us to stray from Him, in spite of everything. When we did stray, and fell from Him, again and again He returned to us, helped us, forgave us.

When it became all that was left, He even sent His Son to us, to minister to us and provide us the way back to Him through belief in that Son and acceptance of His grace and forgiveness. And the Church of God reflects this same mystery.

The Church has many members all over the world. Each has a different gift, task, different troubles, and experiences to provide to the whole. And, the Church needs them all.

Some are called to minister the Gospel. Some are called to sing. Some offer their talents with flowers, or writing, or making music, or balancing a checkbook. Some may cook, and some may simply offer a smile to the new people who join the congregation. All are important, far too important to waste.

As St. Paul says, *“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body.”*

Conclusion:

We cannot all be the same, nor should we be. Just as the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” we must understand that every member of Christ’s body is necessary. We must never feel that some members of the Church are less important than others. Instead, we must realize that each adds to the body in his or her own, but equally valuable, way.

This is so that the entirety of Christ’s body may not be in schism, but rather care for each other. It is so easy for us to be

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”⁴ In the Name of the ✠ Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the ✠ Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Development:

How are we to understand God? How could it be that there are three distinct persons in the Trinity, yet only one God? How is it that God—Who is perfect—could accept and love imperfect humans? Why would God even wish to do so?

At first consideration, these seem questions beyond our human understanding.

We know that the first Person of the Trinity is God the Father. He is the ultimate creator of the totality of the universe and maker of all things that were made. The second Person of the Trinity is the Son, co-equal and co-existent with the Father. The Son is the Lord and Savior of the world and of people of God. Then there is the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Ghost or, as we sometimes say, Holy Spirit. These three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are equal and, further, are one Being. Three Persons, yet one Being.

In our Second Lesson today we are given insight into the natures of the Church, and of our Lord: *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body....”* So the Church, made up of many

members, is one Church, one body. To be sure, different members have different functions, or skills. They may have different roles to fulfill or jobs to perform. Yet, they are all members of the one Church universal.

In the case of the Trinity, as stated in the 39 Articles, “There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power and eternity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.”

Something similar is set forth in the Athanasian Creed, which is included in most traditional Books of Common Prayer around the world, although Puritan influence caused it to be excluded from the American one:

“[W]e worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

“Neither confounding the Persons : nor dividing the substance.

“For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son : and another of the Holy Ghost.

“But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one : the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal...

“... ”

“And yet they are not three eternals : but one eternal.”

Most of the great heresies in the Church have centered around questions about the nature of God in the Trinity. It is a difficult concept for people who have been brought up believing there is only one way to approach any given question, and only one answer.

Among these heresies were Saballianism, which held that God the Father and Jesus Christ were not distinct persons, Arianism, which suggested that Christ was a creature made by God, Nestorianism, which claimed that Christ was two distinct persons (human and divine) and Monophysitism, which held that Christ was one person with only one nature rather than two, separate, divine and human natures.

Each of these distortions has been rejected by the Church, as each failed accurately to describe the relationship between the persons of the Trinity. Saballianism effectively denied the existence of the Trinity. Arianism suggested that Christ was a lesser God. Nestorianism denied that Christ was at the same time both fully divine and fully human, and Monophysitism suggested that Christ was neither fully human nor fully divine.

But consider the words of St. Matthew: “*And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*”⁵

Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, fully human, being baptized by John, with the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, descending on Him while the voice of the Father came from above: “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” Here, clearly and obviously, are three Persons, each involved in different aspects of the event, yet at the same time, all one: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are left in awe at the very idea that this magnificent, Holy, all-powerful, all-knowing God could love us humans. We are, after all, such fallible creatures. Yet the Father does love us. He sent His only Son to live with us, and to die because of us to reconcile us to Himself. And more, He wants us to be part of His Son in spiritual union that will permit us to dwell in heaven with Him.