
⁹ St. Matthew 6:23 (KJV).

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SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER¹ The Second Sunday after Trinity²

Lessons:³

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the eighth Verse of the fourth Chapter of the Second Book of the Kings, commonly called the Fourth Book of the Kings.⁴

“And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem [**SHOE-nemm**], where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there. And he said to Gehazi [**geh-HAY-zigh**] his servant, Call this Shunammite [**SHOE-numb-ight**]. And when he had called her, she stood before him. And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people. And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi [**geh-HAY-zigh**] answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the twelfth Verse of the fourteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke.⁵

“Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

“And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed [SHOWD] his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson:

are more important to them than are God’s rules. This is the most dangerous kind of error because it is a direct rejection of the primacy of God.

Our media are daily full of examples of exactly this kind of thing. We can but pray for those put in this terrible position, and give thanks for those who find the courage and devotion to stand up for what they know is right.

We must be thankful too, for the examples of those who find the courage to make the time for God and who do not let the busy-ness of life prevent them from attending to the true business of this life: serving God.

Let us pray.

Lord, give to each of us the ability to listen to Your will in our lives. Help us to develop the devotion, the courage and the dedication to follow Your will, rather than the will of the world. Help us to withstand the pressures of the world and to instead bind ourselves always to You. This we pray in Jesus’ Holy Name. *Amen.*

—ooOoo—

The Rev. Mr. Larry Wagoner, MSW¹⁰
June 17, 2012

¹ “Any set of Psalms and Lessons appointed for the evening of any day may be read at the morning service, and any set of morning Psalms and Lessons may be read in the evening.” *Concerning the Service of the Church*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER viii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

² This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for the Second Sunday after Trinity, 2012.

³ *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxvii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

⁴ II Kings 4:8-17 (KJV).

⁵ St. Luke 14:12-24 (KJV).

⁶ St. Luke 14:16 (KJV).

⁷ St. Mark 2:23 (KJV).

⁸ St. Luke 12:18.

And what becomes of those who reject the call? Jesus says plainly that those who refuse the Gospel call, who reject Him, would not be saved. The invitation to accept the Gospel is made freely, but the decision is ours.

How many people do you know who “put off” their invitations from God? How many who let the day-to-day worries and struggles of life interfere in their listening to God and His commands?

We sometimes hear from these folks that they have no choice at the present time. “I want to go to church,” they may say, “but I’m really too busy right now. I know I need to take care of my faith life, and I hope maybe someday soon I will have time.” They have no time to pray, to read scripture or take part in worship.

There is no time for delay. Remember the man of whom Our Lord spoke, who congratulated himself because his harvest was too plentiful to be stored in his barns and storehouses? As he gleefully made plans to build more storage facilities, God disclosed to him that his plans were in vain because that very night his soul would be called home and his riches would be enjoyed not by him but by his heir.⁸ He had waited too long to turn from this world’s business to that of the next.

We do not know the day, nor the time when there will be no more time. We do not know when our last chance will have passed. Some of these who have no time for God are found in front of the television set, some taking a nap, some are perhaps playing golf or are engaged in other activities. But God commands us, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*”⁹

Sadder yet are those who say that while they know that the things they do are wrong, they have no choice, because the rules of the world make it impossible for them to follow God’s rules. These misguided people are declaring that man’s rules

“A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed [SHOWD] his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”⁶

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

We are a busy lot, scurrying about trying to handle the details and minutiae of our lives. Often, we let our busy-ness interfere with what is really necessary and important in our lives. At its least, this is destructive to our peace of mind and enjoyment of our lives and serves as a stumbling block to our life with God. At its worst, it can put our very salvation at risk.

In today’s Second Lesson, our Lord tells a parable about a man who gave a great dinner, and invited certain people to attend and celebrate with him. In conformity with the traditions of the day, when it came time for the dinner, he sent his servant out to summon his invited guests. Sadly, they began to make excuses as to why they could not come.

That parable, of course, is a metaphor: God had invited the people of Israel to the greatest of feasts, the feast of salvation and forgiveness through His Son. He promised a feast for the soul, as well as for the body. Yet many found reasons and ways to refuse His invitation.

The Pharisees argued that Jesus could not be the Savior, because He and His followers did not always follow Pharisaical teachings. They picked grain on the Sabbath Day to eat.⁷ Jesus dared to heal on the Sabbath, and even chose to associate with sinners, tax collectors and beggars.

Others were upset that Jesus was not the military leader they thought they needed, and so they rejected Him. And so they refused God's invitation to His feast, just as those invited refused the invitation of the man in Jesus' parable.

No doubt each of them could make plausible explanations for why he refused to come. In Jesus' parable, one had bought some land, and had yet to go see that land. Another had purchased oxen and needed to try them out. Still another was recently married and had to spend time with his wife.

It isn't that these things—and all the other things with which we, too, fill our lives—are unimportant. It is that listening to and following God's will for us is far more important and vital. Which comes first, we might well ask: our day-to-day tasks, or attending to God's wishes for us?

Now, the man in the parable who was giving the feast was a notable person in his own society. The custom of sending out the servant to summon the invited to the feast was limited to those of higher class. To refuse the summons then, as now, was a terrible insult. The kinds of excuses offered by those invited would not be acceptable, either then or now.

But it is the host's response to the insult that is remarkable. When the invited guests refused their invitations, the man, being angry, turned to others to attend his feast.

In the same way, when the Jews refused the offers of God, He commanded the Apostles to turn to the Gentiles. If those initially invited do not seem to realize the value of attending the feast, there are others who do, and they willingly and gladly accept the offer. While the Pharisees and their followers refused God's invitation to salvation, others throughout the world jumped to the opportunity. They, the poor, the lowly, those of lesser estate find themselves as welcome at the feast as any who first were invited.

They were found in the streets and lanes of the city. They were not those of high estate. Yet, in the parable, even after these poor disadvantaged people were invited in, still there was room at the feast, and so the man sent forth his servants to bring in even more.

This feast, as described by Our Lord to His disciples, set the pattern for what the Church actually did. As we see in Acts, and as the whole corpus of St. Paul's Epistles testifies, after the first Christians evangelized the Jews, they then turned to the Gentiles of Jerusalem and other local places. Next they went a bit farther afield, as to Samaria, then when all the people of Palestine had been offered God's invitation and those who were minded were brought to faith, then the Apostles went out further, bringing the call of God to the uttermost places of the Earth. The mercy of God is not exhausted, heaven is not full: thanks be to God!

We are yet called to continue to bring the Word of God to all people everywhere. We are to urge them, to use every manner of exhortation we have at our command to bring them to faith.