

**Addresses
for
Morning and Evening Prayer**

**according to the
1943 Lectionary
of the
USA 1928 Book of Common Prayer**

**Intended for use
by Layreaders
in the absence of a priest**

**by Ed Pacht
Rochester NH**

Advent 2

Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Isaiah 52:1-13

Here beginneth the fifty-second Chapter of the Prophet Isaiah.

1 Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

3 For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.

4 For thus saith the Lord GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

5 Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed.

6 Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

These images fill the hymns of Advent
and of Christmas.
May they draw us evermore
not only to the manger,
but to the Cross,
to the Resurrection
to the hope of His glorious return,
and may we be drawn to deep prayer,
to repentance,
to the Table of the Lord,
to knowledge of His presence,
and finally to His Heavenly Kingdom.

Let us again pray the words of today's Collect:

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures
to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in
such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly
digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy
holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast,
the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou
hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

=====

9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste
places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted
his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the
eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth
shall see the salvation of our God.

11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence,
touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of
her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the
LORD.

12 For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by
flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the
God of Israel will be your reward.

13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he
shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

Here endeth the First Lesson.

Second Lesson: Luke 1:26-56

*Here beginneth the twenty-sixth verse of the First
Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke.*

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent
from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was
Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's
name was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail,
thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee:
blessed art thou among women.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his
saying, and cast in her mind what manner of
salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for
thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;

40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

And He went on, saying
to those Bible scholars standing before Him,
*"And ye will not come to me,
that ye might have life"*

As Catholic Christians we come to Him,
to the New Testament,
to the Fathers, and to Holy Tradition,
for the aid and guidance
He promised to His Church,
and find that the center and the only real subject
of all Holy Scripture
is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

And so, whatever else we may find
in reading the Old Testament,
if we have not found Christ,
we have not understood.
And Isaiah gives us a beautiful symbolic picture of
the Coming One,
the rod of Jesse,
the ensign of the people,
the righteous judge,
the champion of the poor,
the bringer of peace,
a peace so profound that the lion can lie down with
the lamb,

*"They shall not hurt nor destroy
in all my holy mountain:
for the earth shall be full
of the knowledge of the LORD,
as the waters cover the sea."*

He went on to observe,
"In them you THINK you have eternal life,"
 implying that they, in fact, did not.

"Search the Holy Books with all your might,"
 He seems to say,
 "but you're fooling yourselves
 if you think that's what gets you to Heaven."

A man and a Bible,
 if the man is trusting in his own wisdom,
 will not produce Truth.
 He has eyes, but does not see.
 He has ears, but does not hear.
 He does not have the spiritual ability
 to see the unseen.

What Our Lord says of the Scriptures is this:
"...They are they which testify of me..."

Thus the reading from the Prophet Isaiah:
 We can't know
 what Isaiah thought he was writing about,
 and we don't need to.
 We can't know
 what his hearers thought he was writing about,
 and we don't need to.
 There's been a lot of very interesting work done
 to try to answer these questions,
 and there is nothing wrong with that,
 It is a good thing to search the Scriptures,
 but Our Lord said,
"They are they which testify of me."

43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of
 my Lord should come to me?

44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation
 sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb
 for joy.

45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall
 be a performance of those things which were told
 her from the Lord.

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the
 Lord,

47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his
 handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all
 generations shall call me blessed.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great
 things; and holy is his name.

50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from
 generation to generation.

51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath
 scattered the proud in the imagination of their
 hearts.

52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
 and exalted them of low degree.

53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and
 the rich he hath sent empty away.

54 He hath helped his servant Israel, in remem-
 brance of his mercy;

55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to
 his seed for ever.

56 And Mary abode with her about three months,
 and returned to her own house.

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily

God is calling.
 We heard it in both lessons this morning.
 He spoke through the prophet to His people Israel.
 He spoke through an angel to a young girl
 chosen to be the Mother of His Son.
 And He speaks by the Holy Spirit
 to His Church in our own time.
 The background is the same.
 The call is the same.
 The message is the same.
 Nothing has really changed.
 It's as the Book of Ecclesiastes said,
"There is nothing new under the sun."
 But there will be.

Since the Fall of man,
 the world has been full of evil.
 "You have sold yourselves for nothing,"
 says Isaiah.
 He goes on to talk about captivity, about bondage,
 about slavery.
 God's people, he says,
 are made to howl by their oppressors,
 and they constantly hear their God being blasphemed.

Mary's song of praise and deliverance,
 the Magnificat that we sing at Evensong,
 reflects a background where the proud stand high,
 the mighty rule,
 and the rich allow the poor to starve,
 a world where His people
 need the help of His mercy.

Homily

(St. John 5:39-40)
*"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye
 have eternal life:
 and they are they which testify of me.
 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have
 life."*

Today is often called Bible Sunday,
 principally because of the Collect,
 in which we ask
 that we may read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest
 the written Word.

This verse is often used
 to support a "Bible only" approach,
 the Reformation notion that a Christian needs
 only his Bible
 to arrive at the whole truth.

Is that what we are being told?
 Jesus is speaking to the Scribes and the Pharisees,
 the recognized experts in the written Law.
 They knew their Bible,
 and could, in fact, quote huge portions of it
 from memory.

Their lives were committed to explaining
 what they understood from it,
 and they put great effort into living
 what they thought they knew.

"Search the Scriptures," He said,
 knowing full well that
 that was just what they did day after day,
 just what they had committed themselves to do.

Second Lesson: John 5:30-40

Here beginneth the thirtieth verse of the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.

30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

32 There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

33 Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

35 He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

36 But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

We live in a world full of wars,
a world where some live in comfort
never imagined in days gone by,
and others starve,
where the best medical care that has ever existed
doesn't stop the spread of dreadful plagues,
where moral standards are not only disregarded,
but openly despised,
and the airwaves are dominated
by people shouting at each other.

In a famous cartoon by Walt Kelley,
Pogo the Possum, in military garb comments:
"we have met the enemy, and he is us."
There's truth in that.
"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."
That includes all of us, with no exceptions.
This world is a mess, and always has been,
and why?
Because we made it that way.

Listen to this, from Genesis 6:5-6:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

In a passage that shows the depths of the grief
and anger in the heart of God
over the sins and wickedness of mankind,
we hear of a great flood that wipes out
almost the whole human race.

That's the background, but there is a call.

Because sin is no small matter,
mercy is no small matter either.

St. John 3:16 comes against that background,
as it is quoted in the Prayer Book Mass:

*"So God loved the world,
that he gave his only-begotten Son,
to the end that all that believe in him
should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

This picture of God looking down shows another side:
God sees sin, which he hates,
but He loves mankind,
and His answer is greater than the whole universe:
He sent His Son.

*"Awake, awake!" says Isaiah,
"Put on your beautiful clothes,
shake off the dust,
my people shall know my name."*

*"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet
of him that bringeth good tidings,
that publisheth peace;
that bringeth good tidings of good,
that publisheth salvation;
that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"*

Whose feet?

*"... the angel came in unto her, and said,
Hail, thou that art highly favoured,
the Lord is with thee:
blessed art thou among women. ...
...And the angel said unto her,*

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

Here endeth the First Lesson.

Evening Prayer B

First Lesson: Isaiah 11:1-10

Here beginneth the eleventh chapter of the Prophet Isaiah.

1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

Fear not, Mary:

for thou hast found favour with God.

...And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS."

His feet.

Isaiah promised Him.

Mary conceived and bore Him in her womb.

He walked among us, preached among us, and died among us,

and on those bleeding, beautiful feet leads us to a call, an invitation, a promise, an answer to all the evils of this world.

It's Advent.

Soon we'll remember His Holy Incarnation,

At this altar

we celebrate His Presence here and now, but we look with hope to his Coming again, for he shall come again in glory, to judge both the quick and the dead.

Let us pray.

We beseech thee, O lord, pour thy grace into our hearts; that, as we have known the incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by thy cross and passion we may be brought unto the glory of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

=====

+++++++

see also the sermon by Canon Hollister
under this date
in the Sermons by Other Authors

Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: Isaiah 55

Here beginneth the fifty-fifth chapter of the Prophet Isaiah.

1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

We just can't make it on our own.

No matter how hard we try, we keep falling back into sin.

We need His help.

We need his constant forgiveness.

We need the sacraments:

Baptism, the Eucharist, Confession, and the rest.

We need every gift that He offers us,

but we need to do everything in our power to walk worthy.

Advent brings us that call.

Let us pray:

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

=====

And He has done so.
 And they have declared it to us.
 In the Scriptures we have heard tonight,
 and have remembered in today's collect,
 and in the Tradition
 which has brought those Scriptures to us,
 and embodies the interpretation
 of wise followers of our Lord.
 They have imparted that revelation to us.
 Yes, He will come, "As a thief in the night".
 No, we cannot know the time or the season,
 but we have our warning,
 and we can be ready.

St. Paul tells us of his bringing of
 this same message to the Thessalonian church.
 He brought it with plain speaking,
 not only with words, but mainly by example.
 Yes, he brought a message of joy.
 Yes, he brought a message of peace,
 but it was not a message to pray a prayer,
 and receive a Saviour into one's heart,
 and then assume that everything is OK.
 The prayer and the acceptance of salvation
 are certainly a part of it,
 but only a beginning
 Hear the Apostle:

*"...ye know how we exhorted
 and comforted and charged every one of you,
 as a father doth his children,
 That ye would walk worthy of God,
 who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."*

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so
 are my ways higher than your ways, and my
 thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow
 from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth
 the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it
 may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my
 mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall
 accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper
 in the thing whereto I sent it.

12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth
 with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break
 forth before you into singing, and all the trees of
 the field shall clap their hands.

13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree,
 and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle
 tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an
 everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Here endeth the First Lesson.

Second Lesson: 2 Timothy 3

***Here beginneth the third chapter of the second
 Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy.***

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous
 times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, cov-
 etous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to
 parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false
 accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that
 are good,
 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures
 more than lovers of God;
 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the
 power thereof: from such turn away.
 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses,
 and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led
 away with divers lusts,
 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the
 knowledge of the truth.
 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so
 do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt
 minds, reprobate concerning the faith.
 9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly
 shall be manifest unto all men, as their's also was.
 10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine,
 manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering,
 charity, patience,
 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at
 Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I
 endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.
 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus
 shall suffer persecution.
 13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and
 worse, deceiving, and being deceived.
 14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast
 learned and hast been assured of, knowing of
 whom thou hast learned them;
 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy
 scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto
 salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Soon we'll be remembering
 the familiar sweet story of a birth in Bethlehem.
 We will be rejoicing
 in the Incarnation of our Lord,
 that God became man
 to bring us the gift of salvation.
 But right now it is Advent,
 and the message is somewhat different.
 The gift is salvation,
 but the gift is given because it is needed.

*"Be sober, be vigilant," wrote St. Peter,
 "for your adversary the devil
 goeth about as a roaring lion,
 seeking whom he may devour."*

The lion roars when there is prey,
 and wise men pay attention.

*"Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the peo-
 ple not be afraid?"*

Alarms are meant to be scary.
 The hearer is supposed to fear
 enough to do something about it.
 That's the only reason for sounding an alarm

Advent is a four week long alarm:
 a red alert, as it were.
 The King is coming, and we are not ready.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"

*"Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing,
 unless he reveals his secret unto his servants the
 prophets."*

it will not be long
 before they aren't together at all any more.
 It would be very easy to apply this
 in any number of ways:
 we could think of politics,
 of personal relationships,
 of marriage even,
 or of business partnerships,
 or you name it.
 It is very tempting to apply it specifically
 to our withdrawal from the Episcopal Church.
 We and they couldn't agree,
 and thus we walk apart.
 Perhaps there's something in that,
 but that is not what the Prophet meant.
 It's the Word of the Lord to His people:
*"Can you walk with Me,
 if you don't agree with me?"*

*"We have erred and strayed from thy way
 like lost sheep,"* we prayed earlier.
 We've made up our own minds
 and gone off in our own ways,
 and we no longer walk with Him.
 That's what sin is

*"Will a lion roar in the forest,
 when he hath no prey?
 will a young lion cry out of his den,
 if he have taken nothing?"*

 John the Baptist came shouting in the wilderness,
 He shouted "Repent!"
 He shouted, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."
 He cried out a warning.

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and
 is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correc-
 tion, for instruction in righteousness:
 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thor-
 oughly furnished unto all good works.

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily

*"This know also,
 that in the last days perilous times shall come.
 For men shall be lovers of their own selves,
 covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,
 disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
 Without natural affection, trucebreakers,
 false accusers, incontinent, fierce,
 despisers of those that are good,
 Traitors, heady, highminded,
 lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;
 Having a form of godliness,
 but denying the power thereof:
 from such turn away."*

That's what St. Paul said to his protege,
 St. Timothy,
 and it was an astoundingly accurate,
 though dreadfully unflattering,
 description of his own time;
 and a good description of our times as well.

That was all the way back in the First Century.
 But could anything be more up to date?
 More accurate as a description of our own times?
 We're Traditional Anglicans.
 Didn't we turn away from such as those?
 Isn't that our reason for being?

Well ...

Think on that a moment,
 This is indeed a troublesome time.
 We are indeed in the "Last Days",
 those days between the Resurrection of Our Lord
 and His coming again in glory,
 and these words are always fitting.
 There is indeed a lot going on that we should oppose.
 It is a messed up world, full of evils
 But do we exist in order to oppose what is wrong?
 Is a Continuing Anglican simply
 a former Episcopalian, whose major job
 is to grouse about how horrible his former church is?
 Or is there more to it?
 Do we have a higher mission than we realize?
 Who are we?
 Why do we exist?
 What are we seeking?

John the Baptist knew his mission.
 He came striding out of the desert with a message:
"Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"

Isaiah gives us the same timeless message,
 a message not just for those days long gone by,
 but for these days in which we live,

It is a call to the Church,
 to each individual member of the Church.

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted
 and charged every one of you, as a father doth his
 children,

12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath
 called you unto his kingdom and glory.

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing,
 because, when ye received the word of God which
 ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of
 men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which
 effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"
 asked the Prophet Amos.

What a piercing question
 for this season of Advent!
 He's not talking to unbelievers,
 but to His own people

*"Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken
 against you, O children of Israel."*

This is the way this evening's
 Old Testament lesson begins,
 a message then to the chosen people of Israel,
 a message today
 to the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

If two people start down a road
 and they cannot agree which turnings to take,

Second Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-13

Here beginneth the second chapter of the first Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

It is a call from the Church,
and from each member of the Church,
to the world around us.

*"If you are thirsty, come and drink;
if you are hungry, come and eat;
If your burden is heavy and your labor hard,
come and rest.
You are a sinner, come and be forgiven."*

*"We have erred and strayed from thy ways,
like lost sheep," we prayed,
and so we have.*

We are not worthy to approach Him,
and we cannot make ourselves
worthy to approach Him.

*"...my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."*

It's a call to lay aside our own preferences
and our own opinions.

It's a call to admit that we are wrong
-- seriously wrong.

It's a call to come to Him as we are,
and to submit ourselves to His cleansing promise.

It's a call to be holy
(though we cannot by our own effort),
for He is holy,
and, by the Sacrifice

of His blood poured out on Calvary,
that same Sacrifice
that we meet as often as we are able,
at the Altar of the Eucharist,

-- by that Sacrifice
we are bought, we are redeemed,
we are being cleansed.

Yes, this world is full of evil.
 Yes, there are wars and rumors of wars.
 Yes, there is hatred and bigotry
 everywhere we look.
 Yes, there is immorality,
 even the denial of true morality, all around us.
 Yes, there are churches
 who have forsaken the truth, and teach lies.
 All of this is true.
 All of this is real.
 But in the midst of it all, there is a still small voice.
 We hear it in almost the last verse of Scripture
 (Revelation 22:17)

*“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.
 And let him that heareth say, Come.
 And let him that is athirst come.
 And whosever will,
 let him take the water of life freely.”*

Let us again pray the words of today's Collect:

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures
 to be written for our learning; Grant that we may
 in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and in-
 wardly digest them, that by patience and comfort
 of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold
 fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which
 thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.
 Amen.

=====

Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: Amos 3:1-8

*Here beginneth the third chapter of the Prophet
 Amos.*

1 Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken
 against you, O children of Israel, against the whole
 family which I brought up from the land of Egypt,
 saying,

2 You only have I known of all the families of
 the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your
 iniquities.

3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no
 prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he
 have taken nothing?

5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where
 no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from
 the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people
 not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the
 LORD hath not done it?

7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he
 revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord
 GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

Here endeth the First Lesson.