

unto this day, witnessing both to small and great,
saying none other things than those which the
prophets and Moses did say should come:

23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be
the first that should rise from the dead, and should
shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Here endeth the second lesson.

Homily

**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**

**St. Paul
(January 25)**

Morning Prayer

First Lesson: Isaiah 45:18-25

*Here beginneth the eighteenth verse
of the forty-fifth chapter of the Prophet Isaiah.*

18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens;
God himself that formed the earth and made it; he
hath established it, he created it not in vain, he
formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and
there is none else.

19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of
the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye
me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I
declare things that are right.

20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near
together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they
have no knowledge that set up the wood of their
graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot
save.

21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take
counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient
time? who hath told it from that time? have not I
the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a
just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of
the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of
my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return,
That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue
shall swear.

24 Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I
righteousness and strength: even to him shall men

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority
and commission from the chief priests,

13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light
from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining
round about me and them which journeyed with
me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I
heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the
Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou
me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I
am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have
appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a
minister and a witness both of these things which
thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I
will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the
Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from
darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto
God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and
inheritance among them which are sanctified by
faith that is in me.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobe-
dient unto the heavenly vision:

20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at
Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea,
and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent
and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the
temple, and went about to kill me.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue

1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God, unto our fathers:

7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

Here endeth the first lesson.

Second Lesson: 2 Cor 12:1-9

Here beginneth the twelfth chapter of the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Here endeth the second lesson.

Homily

The Prayer Book calls this the Feast of St. Paul. The older name for the day is The Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle, as there has long been a feast also of his martyrdom. In today's Communion Service we hear the story of his encounter with Jesus as he was riding on the Damascus Road with a mission to destroy this new faith, a task he'd already been pursuing with vigor. The Lord appeared to him, called him to Himself, and commissioned him as Apostle to the gentiles.

This man Saul, accepted the Savior and the call, began using his Greek Name, Paul, and carried the Gospel to the wider Roman culture, and thus it is that we Gentiles came to Christ. Paul walked close with God, received divine inspiration to write what became over half the New Testament, worked many miracles, and experienced the divine presence.

Evening Prayer

First Lesson: Jer 1:4-10

Here beginneth the fourth verse of the first chapter of the Prophet Jeremiah.

4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Here endeth the first lesson.

Second Lesson: Acts 26:1-23

Here beginneth the twenty-sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles

It's not how pious I am,
 what transports of ecstasy I can report,
 how successfully I can preach or write or sing.
 No, none of that really matters.
 What matters is Christ in me,
 the grace of God in accepting such a sinner as I,
 the grace of God in sanctifying me over time,
 the grace of God in leading me,
 patiently and surely,
 though I stumble and fail again and again,
 leading me, one day, to His Heaven.
 As Isaiah continues:

*"Surely, shall one say,
 in the LORD have I righteousness and strength:
 even to him shall men come; "*

Let us pray.

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
 Christ behind me, Christ before me,
 Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
 Christ to comfort and restore me,
 Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
 Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
 Christ in hearst of all that love me,
 Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.
 Praise to the Lord of my salvation.
 Salvation is of Christ the Lord. Amen.

We won't dwell on his adventures this morning,
 though they were many and spectacular,
 but we will follow these lessons
 and think of his attitude and the faith he held.

"I knew such a man", he says,
 and it is generally accepted that he was actually
 speaking of himself,

*"How that he was caught up into paradise,
 and heard unspeakable words,
 which it is not lawful for a man to utter. "*

What a wonderful experience it is
 that these few words express,
 to step into the presence of God,
 to walk the golden streets,
 to look upon His Face,
 to hear His Voice.
 What glory!
 Maybe some of us
 have tasted a little of these things.
 The days of miracles and visions have not passed.
 God is still very near and very active among us.
 Christian mysticism is a very real thing
 Most of us will have no such testimony to give,
 and we may feel something is lacking,
 but listen to St. Paul

"Of such an one will I glory: "

He'll testify with joy that God does appear
 to His people,
 that His Presence is real among us,
 that God is not out of reach, but he goes on:

*“yet of myself I will not glory,
but in mine infirmities.”*

The fact that God reveals Himself
is to be celebrated,
but the person that meets Him in this way
has nothing to brag about.

Who is Paul?
Who is any Christian,
whether recognized saint or obscure pew-sitter

We are sinners saved by grace.
“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God”
said St. Paul on another occasion,
and he included himself in that.
We are weak in so many ways,
and the mightiest of exploits for God
doesn’t change that one whit.

St. Paul went on, famously,
to write of a “thorn in the flesh”.
There’s been endless debate
as to what that might have been:
a physical infirmity?
an unattractive appearance?
some sort of besetting temptation?
a difficult person always plaguing him?
All these things have been mentioned,
but does it really matter?

What does matter
is that we, with all our weakness
belong to Him.
We have been bought and paid for
with the precious Blood of Jesus.

St. Paul prayed with fervor,
three times, he says,
for this “thorn” to be taken away,
and it was not,
but rather he heard His voice:

“My grace is sufficient for thee.”

Everywhere you look today,
especially in the field of religion,
you see strong leaders.
There are well-known television evangelists.
There are pastors of huge “megachurches”
There are the writers
of phenomenally successful books,
and there are the leaders of cult after cult.
This is to say nothing of impressive political leaders
in every nation, including our own,
who are thought to have all the answers,
but St. Paul knew what Isaiah knew,
what we heard in the First Lesson today:

*“Look unto me, and be ye saved,
all the ends of the earth:
or I am God, and there is none else.
I have sworn by myself,
the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness,
and shall not return,
That unto me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear.*

What matters is not my strength
It’s not my goodness,
nor my wisdom,
nor my experience.