

Trinity 18

(There are three choices of propers for each office this week. Homilies are given for Morning Prayer B and for Evening Prayer A. Others to be written.)

Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Prov 2:1-9

Second Lesson: 1 Tim 3:14-4:16

Homily to be written

see also the sermon by Canon Hollister
for these lessons, under this date
in the Sermons by Other Authors

Trinity 18

Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: Amos 8:4-12

Second Lesson: John 7:37-53

Homily

John, in chapter 7, verse 52,
sets the stage for today's lessons:

*[the Pharisees] answered and said ...
".. out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."*

Jesus was boldly proclaiming the Word of God,
calling the thirsty to come to Him
for the living water.

Many were being drawn to believe,
but the Pharisees, the religious leaders,
refused to hear His word,
sought for every excuse they could find
to turn the people away from Him,
and finally seized upon the prejudices of the people,
using what seems to have been a folk saying,
directed against a region thought to be backward,
and rather "unjewish".

Why, no prophet ever came out of Gallilee,
didn't you know that?

Our Old Testament lesson, however,
is from the Prophet Amos, who did.
He was a shepherd in the Northern Kingdom,
then called Israel, in the same general area
that was later known as Gallilee,
and there received the call to be a prophet,
and stood up boldly to proclaim the word of God
before the high and the mighty,
and to those who claimed to be the religious leaders.
It was not a pleasant message he brought,
not one that the proud received easily.

Those to whom he spoke
certainly appeared to be pious.
They did no work on the sabbath,
and refused to do business even at the new moon.
They seem to have been faithful in keeping
all the external ritual observances,
taking care that everyone see them
as the pious and faithful leaders of Israel,
and basking in the respect and admiration
that come with that kind of reputation.
They were waiting for the new moon to pass
and for the sabbath day to end,
so they could once again do business.

All that sounds good,
but Amos knew better,
and, thus, so do we.

As soon as the Sabbath was over, he said,
the rich were ready to become richer
by cheating the poor,
by giving too little grain for too much money,
and poor quality at that,
passing themselves off
as pillars of the community,
as pious men to be admired and imitated.

The Lord has sworn, said Amos,
not to forget their deeds,
not to ignore their cheating,
nor to pass by the scorn they had toward the poor,
but to hold them accountable,
to show them His judgment.
He has declared that he neither accepts nor blesses
their great show of devotion, but rather says,
*"... I will turn your feasts into mourning,
and all your songs into lamentation;
and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins,
... and I will make it as the mourning of an only son,
and the end thereof as a bitter day. "*

Some centuries later

the everlasting Son of God,
having taken flesh
and come into His own creation,
though born in Bethlehem
according to the prophets,
was raised in Gallilee, in the city of Nazareth,
and came from Gallilee,
to preach among the people of Judea,
and found there rich men,
of the same sort as those Amos confronted,
men of great piety,
scrupulous to keep every detail of every law,
and to do it publicly, so as to be admired,
while making their living
at the expense of the poor.

In today's reading,
we hear how they attempted to arrest Jesus,
accusing Him of deceiving the people,
and that a division arose among the people.
And so it always is.
The Word of God presents us with a choice,
a choice that can be rightly made,
only through faith,
only in accepting the person of Jesus Christ,
and accepting Him crucified.

While it is difficult

to know what Amos means by
 "I will send",
 it is a clear description of what we see today:

*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD,
 that I will send a famine in the land,
 not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,
 but of hearing the words of the LORD:*

Note: not a famine
 of the proclamation of the Word,
 but a famine of hearing it.
 It is not God's will that any should be lost,
 but it is His will that all have the opportunity
 to hear, understand, and accept His Word,
 or, if they should be so foolish,
 to disbelieve and reject that word of salvation.

We are called to hear,
 and having heard to proclaim that Word,
 whether any hear us or not.

Let us pray.

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, ever hold fast, and
 faithfully proclaim, the blessed hope of everlasting
 life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus
 Christ. Amen.

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Morning Prayer C

First Lesson: Exod 14:5-14, 19-21, 24-28, 30

Second Lesson: Heb 11:23-29, 32-40

Homily to be written**Trinity 18**

Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: Deut 11:18-21, 26-28, 32

Second Lesson: Gal 1:1-12

Homily

Does it matter what you believe?

There seems to be

a very well established opinion today
that it does not.

We have popular songs like

"I'm a Believer",

or the older one, "I Believe",

that glorify the act of believing,

but seem not to have much real content at all,
and you sometimes hear them even in churches.

There are people who will tell us

"I'm religious, in my own way",

and it's become even more common

for people to speak of themselves,

or of someone else, as "spiritual".

What exactly does that mean?

What response do we get if we should ask them.

"Well, what do you believe?"

The answer is often very instructive.

There may be very definite beliefs
that are totally contradictory

to the beliefs of others,

or there may be no more content

than a vague feeling that there is something
more than the material.

Does it matter?

Or is it only important to believe something,
no matter how improbable?

One noted self-help program

promotes reliance on a "higher power",

but is very explicit that it doesn't matter

what your higher power may be,

that anything (to quote a statement often made,

"Even this lightbulb" could be a higher power.)

Does it matter?

Our readings today say that it certainly does.

In Deuteronomy we heard this:

"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words

in your heart and in your soul,

and bind them for a sign upon your hand,

that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

And ye shall teach them your children,

speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house,

and when thou walkest by the way,

when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

And thou shalt write them

*upon the door posts of thine house,
and upon thy gates: "*

In context, the Scripture is speaking of uncompromising adherence to the one and only God, and commitment to obey every part of His Word.

Orthodox Jews today wear two little boxes, called tephilim in Hebrew or phylacteries in the Greek on their arm and on their foreheads, when they pray, which contain selected Scripture verses on just this theme. These verses are also found in the little boxes, called Mezzuzahs, attached to every doorpost of every Orthodox Jewish home. That is probably more literal than it should be, but the idea is clear. These words are important. They are to be believed and defended. They are to be taught to the children. They are to be discussed and remembered in every part of our lives. Those little boxes are reminders that faith has content, and that the content is required of us.

It's for similar reasons that we have crosses, icons, statues, and religious pictures in our homes and in our churches, and that we often wear crosses and the like on our persons.

Reminders that God is real and that we do know some things about Him, and that salvation comes through His incarnate Son.

Deuteronomy reminds us that there is truth, and that it is to be remembered. We also heard from St. Paul, and he said some strikingly hard things:

*"... though we, or an angel from heaven,
preach any other gospel unto you
than that which we have preached unto you,
let him be accursed.
As we said before, so say I now again,
if any man preach any other gospel unto you
than that ye have received,
let him be accursed."*

Faith has substance.
It matters intensely what we believe.
Sincerity is not enough.

Commitment is not enough.
An otherworldly attitude is not enough.
In every service we declare what is true
especially when we recite the Creeds,
and these truths are what we need,
if we are to be saved.

There are many who would teach other messages,
who would minimize, alter, or even omit
the person and work of Jesus Christ,
who would deny His sacraments
and reject the fellowship of His Church.
Of such beware.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, who art the way, the truth, and the life, in whom is our salvation and that of the world, teach us by the Holy Spirit to hold fast all truth that thou hast revealed, and to proclaim it boldly and fearlessly. Defend us, O Lord, from all false teaching and continually strengthen in that faith once delivered, that we and thy whole Church may, at the last, enter into the joy thou hast promised, who livest and reignest with the Father and the same Spirit, one God through ages everlasting. Amen.

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Evening Prayer B

First Lesson: Deut 5:1-21

Second Lesson: Matt 22:34-46

Homily to be written

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Evening Prayer C

First Lesson: 1 Kings 19

Second Lesson: Acts 21:7-19, 27-39

Homily to be written