

Sermon for Morning Prayer Sunday Next Before Advent

Lessons:

First Lesson: Here beginneth the fourteenth Verse of the third Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.

“... Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

Second Lesson: Here beginneth the seventeenth Verse of the eleventh Chapter of the First Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians.

“... Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.”
In the Name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Introduction:

Anglicanism is a branch of Catholicism, that is, it shares the unaltered Faith that was held world-wide by the one, undivided Church to which all Christians belonged prior to the Great Schism of 1054 A.D. As one famous teacher of dogmatics put it:

“The Church exists to propagate certain beliefs. ... [A]ll that she teaches is centered in Christ, and her message is sufficiently set forth in Scripture. Hence, in all her teaching she must be faithful to the message that she was founded to proclaim. Her primary function is that of *witness*. She is to bear witness before the world to the truth.”

Theme:

If the Church exists to proclaim this original message which she was founded to proclaim, then certainly one of the central truths of that message is that Christ is present with us and for us in His Sacraments. Most especially, He is regularly and continuously present with us and for us in the Eucharist, one of the two Sacraments that are, as the Catechism teaches, “generally necessary to salvation”. In this context, “generally necessary” means that the Eucharist is necessary to the generality of mankind, that is, to all who are not prevented by forces beyond their control from participating in it.

Development:

1. Our belief that Christ is, in some real and actual way, present in the consecrated elements of the Eucharist is what we call the “Real Presence”.

The Articles of Religion teach us that “The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to

another; but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ."

As that same Article likewise tells us, "The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is Faith." It is for this reason that in the Canon of Consecration of the Eucharist, in the portion called the invocation, we pray:

"AND we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us; and, of thy almighty goodness, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine; that we, receiving them according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood." As an old manual for the instruction of the laity put it,

"The Eucharist, therefore, is the divinely appointed way in which the Christian Church makes its *continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ*. But ... the *remembrance* is not just a turning-back in pious reverie to the days of Christ's life and passion and resurrection. It is a living remembrance in which He comes to us with all His redemptive power. That means that He is Himself present as the Eucharist is celebrated. The manner in which Christ is present and communicates Himself to His people in the Holy Communion has never been precisely defined by the Anglican Churches, although the certainty and reality of His presence have been strongly affirmed. Anglicanism accepts Christ's promise that the communicant is made a sharer in the very life of Christ Himself present in the Eucharist. By receiving Christ in the sacramental action, he is enabled to live in Christ as Christ lives in him."

2. Because the Eucharist is a continuing presentation of Our Lord's "one oblation of himself once offered" on Calvary, He is always present and acting in the consecrated elements of the Eucharist.

As the great 18th Century preacher, John Wesley, explained today's Epistle,

"[T]his broken bread is the sign of my body, which is even now to be pierced and wounded for your iniquities. Take then, and eat of, this bread, in an humble, thankful, obediential remembrance of my dying love; of the extremity of my sufferings on your behalf, of the blessings I have thereby procured for you, and of the obligations to love and duty which I have by all this laid upon you.

"... Therefore ye ought not to confound this with a common meal.... The ancient sacrifices were in remembrance of sin: this sacrifice, once offered, is still represented in remembrance of the remission of sins.... Ye show forth the Lord's death -- Ye proclaim, as it were, and openly avow it to God, and to all the world. Till he come -- In glory."

In other words, because in the Eucharist the Sacrifice of Our Lord continues, then He Himself, the sacrificial victim, is necessarily present therein.

3. Because Our Lord is always present and acting in the consecrated elements of the Eucharist, we receive Him for good or for ill, depending upon our own internal dispositions, but we never receive Him with no effect.

As the Articles of Religion tell us, "The Wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint Augustine saith) the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ; yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing."

John Wesley explained this by saying, “Whosoever shall eat this bread unworthily -- That is, in an unworthy, irreverent manner; without regarding either Him that appointed it, or the design of its appointment. Shall be guilty of profaning that which represents the body and blood of the Lord... For he that eateth and drinketh so unworthily as those Corinthians did, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself....”

Conclusion:

In the face of this reality, and of the consequences to us if we confront that reality in a state of sin, before we presume to approach Our Lord in His Sacrament, we ourselves must take to heart John Wesley’s injunction to his readers and hearers:

“But let a man examine himself - Whether he know the nature and the design of the institution, and whether it be his own desire and purpose throughly to comply therewith. For he that eateth and drinketh so unworthily as those Corinthians did, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself....”

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*The Rev’d Canon John A. Hollister
November 23, 2008.*

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

2 1 Corinthians 11:29 (KJV).

3 “Anglicanism has no official theologian in its history.... It gives allegiance simply to the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed; and through these, to the central Christian dogmas which the Creeds express. Above all, it is bound to Holy Scripture itself for the Bible is ‘the Word of God’.” JAMES A. PIKE AND W. NORMAN PITTENGER, THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH, THE CHURCH’S TEACHING, Vol. 3 (New York: PECUSA 1951) p. 16. It is exceedingly odd that two men who later proved to hold such

heterodox personal views could have written so clearly and persuasively to instruct the laity in the orthodox faith.

4 E.J. BICKNELL, *A THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*, 3rd ed., (Longmans Green, 1955), 253. *Emphasis original.*

5 A Catechism, *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER* 581 (PECUSA 1928).

6 Article XXVIII *Of the Lord's Supper*, *Articles of Religion*, *The Book of Common Prayer* 608 (PECUSA 1928).

7 *Ibid.*

8 *The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion*, *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER* 81 (PECUSA 1928).

9 PIKE AND PITTENGER, *op. cit.* 153-154. See also FRANCIS J. HALL, *THEOLOGICAL OUTLINES*, 3rd ed. (Morehouse 1933), p. 261-264 (*emphasis original*).

10 *The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion*, *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER* 80 (PECUSA 1928).

11 JOHN WESLEY, *NOTES ON THE BIBLE*, <http://bible.christiansunite.com/wes.cgi?b=1Co&c=11>.

12 Article XXIX *Of the Wicked, which eat not the Body of Christ in the use of the Lord's Supper*, *Articles of Religion*, *The Book of Common Prayer* 609 (PECUSA 1928).

13 WESLEY, *op.cit.*

14 *Ibid.*

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