

SERMON FOR LAYREADERS THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Brian McKee

First Lesson:

Here beginneth the twenty-first Verse of the eleventh Chapter of the Wisdom of Solomon.

“For thou canst shew thy great strength at all times when thou wilt; and who may withstand the power of thine arm? For the whole world before thee is as a little grain of the balance, yea, as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth. But thou hast mercy upon all; for thou canst do all things, and winkest at the sins of men, because they should amend. For thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made: for never wouldest thou have made any thing, if thou hadst hated it. And how could any thing have endured, if it had not been thy will? or been preserved, if not called by thee? But thou sparest all: for they are thine, O Lord, thou lover of souls. For thine incorruptible Spirit is in all things. Therefore chastenest thou them by little and little that offend, and warnest them by putting them in remembrance wherein they have offended, that leaving their wickedness they may believe on thee, O Lord.”

Second Lesson:

Here beginneth the eighth Chapter of the Gospel According to St. John.

“Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman

standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

Homily:

Today’s Second Lesson is a timeless and beloved demonstration of Jesus Christ’s love and forgiveness. The woman, who is not identified, has been taken by a crowd of Jewish religious authorities, and accused of adultery. The crowd of religious authorities, hoping to trap Jesus, and be able to accuse Him of heresy, reminds Jesus that the law of Moses said she should be stoned. Then they asked Jesus, “... but what sayest thou?”

Jesus gave them an answer that they did not expect. Jesus said to them, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” After that answer, each of the accusers, knowing his own sins and failings, walked away.

Alone with the woman, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?”

She replied, “No man, Lord.”

Then Jesus said to her: “Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.”

This story from the Gospel reminds each us, that, we are, as the Scriptures teach, all guilty of sins. All of us, even on our very best days, fall short of God and His laws. No matter how hard we may try, none of us is totally free from sin.

Jesus is here reminding us all of the importance of confession. He is reminding us that we must all seek forgiveness for our many sins. One of the beauties of the 1928

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER is the penitential nature of the faith we find in its pages. It reminds of our need to seek remission of our sins. Significantly, every office, or service in that 1928 BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER includes a Prayer of Confession.

Sadly, that is not the case in the worship of most denominations today. Most no longer even pray a Prayer of Confession, or have a penitential rite, in their offices and liturgies. Many seem to believe that humankind is good on its own, so that we need not show penitence to God. Or, some seem to believe that no matter what evil we do, it is just automatically forgiven, without our even asking. This is clearly an unscriptural belief. On the contrary, we are repeatedly told in the Scriptures that we must “repent and be Baptized.”

Today’s Second Lesson makes it clear that Jesus Christ, and God, His Father, are loving and forgiving. It is, however, up to us to seek that forgiveness. Accepting Christ’s forgiveness, and His gift of salvation given to us by His sacrificial death on the Cross on Golgotha Hill, is something we must choose to accept.

This lesson has become politically correct in today’s world, because the “politically correct crowd” only pays attention to the first part of Jesus Christ’s statement – the part regarding forgiveness and absolution of the woman. That crowd only considers the words, “Neither do I condemn thee...” and neglects the rest. It wishes to consider only the false belief that anything and everything we do, no matter how evil a life we might live, will all just be forgotten and forgiven, whether we ask or not, and whether, or not, we stop willingly committing further sin.

The “politically correct crowd” also uses only the first part of Jesus’s statement when it seeks to justify or even promote any type of immoral behavior it wishes to support. These people say that if Jesus didn’t condemn her, then, they falsely assert, there is no such thing as sin. They dishonestly use only part of Jesus’s statement to promote the ideas that “anything goes”, “there are no moral absolutes”, and a host of other similar apostasies.

Thus, we need to examine the rest of Christ’s words that show the modern “politically correct” ideas to be false, and a danger to human souls. That second important part of Christ’s words is, “go, and sin no more.”

Jesus made it clear that once we accept His gift of forgiveness and salvation, we must cease purposely committing acts that we know are sin. We must never

knowingly and purposely commit sin, or continue to live a life that we know is in opposition to God's law.

Baptism does not take away our ability to sin. We humans are born with a tendency to sin. After Baptism, we can still commit sins, often accidentally, often by mistake, even when we are truly trying to live a committed Christian life. We must not, however, purposely choose to engage in a pattern of sinful living.

Article 16 of the 39 Articles of Religion, of the Anglican Church, found in the back of our 1928 BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, says this:

“Not every deadly sin willingly committed after Baptism is sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after Baptism. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from the grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may arise again, and amend our lives.

“And therefore they are to be condemned, which say, they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.”

This clearly points out that purposely engaging and continuing to engage in a pattern of sins can cause us to depart from the grace of God, contrary to the false teaching that is promoted in some denominations and sects today.

Article 16, as do the Scriptures, assures that we can return to God's grace through repentance and confession. It also reminds us, as Christ taught, that we must not expect to be forgiven, if we refuse to forgive others. We cannot truly love and honor God, if we harbor hatred or unforgiveness in our hearts towards others.

Today's Second Lesson is a wonderful promise to us, the very promise of God's ability to forgive us. The Precious Body of Christ, broken on the Cross for us, and the Precious Blood of Christ, shed on the Cross for us, paid the debt of our sin. We can be free! This is the Good News -- the Gospel!

Remember the words of a precious, old Hymn:
“On a hill far away, stood an old rugged Cross,
the emblem of suffering and shame.
And I love that old Cross where the Dearest and Best,
for a world of lost sinners was slain.”

Thanks be to God for His loving gift of our redemption upon that old rugged Cross.

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, who sent Thy Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us on and old rugged Cross: forgive us our sins, give us strength to reform and resist the temptation of sin, and bring us at last to life everlasting. *Amen.*

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*2 Psalms and Lessons for the Church Year (1943),
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxx (PECUSA 1928/1943).*

3 Wisdom 11:21-12:2 (KJV).

*4 Psalms and Lessons for the Church Year (1943),
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxx (PECUSA 1928/1943).*

5 John 8:1-11 (KJV).

6 John 8:11 (KJV).