

## SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER

### The Third Sunday in Lent<sup>i</sup>

#### Lessons:<sup>ii</sup>

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the fourth Verse of the fifth Chapter of Amos.<sup>iii</sup>

“For thus saith [SETH] the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live: But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought. Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name: That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.”

Here endeth the First lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the sixteenth Verse of the fifth Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Galatians.<sup>iv</sup>

“... This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

### **Homily:**

This week, I received many emails that were humorous in nature, but this one struck me as being true.

*“Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as: Knowing when to come in out of the rain; Why the early bird gets the worm; Life isn’t always fair; and Maybe it was my fault.*

*“Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies, didn’t spend more than he could earn, and and knew that adults, not children, are in charge. His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate, of teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch, and of a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition. Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children. It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an aspirin to*

*a student but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.*

*“Common Sense lost the will to live as the churches became businesses and criminals received better treatment than their victims. Common Sense took a beating when you couldn’t defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault. Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap and was promptly awarded a huge settlement. Common Sense was preceded in death by his parents, Truth and Trust, by his wife Discretion, his daughter Responsibility, and his son, Reason. He is survived by his 5 mean brothers, I Know My Rights, I Want It Now, Someone Else Is To Blame, I’m A Victim, and Don’t Tell Me What to Do. Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone. If you still remember him, pass this on. If not, do nothing—it’s O.K., you never knew him anyway.”*

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart; be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.”

Today, St. Paul advises the Church of the Galatians of the gifts that we are granted to those that walk in the Spirit. He tells them about the things that are offensive to God as well and is rather vivid in his description.

The email that I read to you brings the same description to light in a more modern way. Either description is just as true in our world today as it was in Paul’s time. Our world is morally, socially and spiritually bankrupt. The New Testament is the Good News and in this letter Paul most assuredly brings us good news. The corruption and decay of this world is not necessary for us. We have been admonished to “Walk in the Spirit” to avoid these corrupt things.

We are capable of doing this because we have been baptized into Christ our Savior and it is He that gives us this ability. As we’ve talked about in weeks past, we are not able to do this alone. We need to recognize the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the world around us. We must participate in the life of the Church around us. By participate, I mean supporting the good work of the Church. We

absolutely must not participate in things that will and do destroy the Church from within. The negative descriptors that St. Paul gives us will accomplish that.

We are reminded that when we “walk in the Spirit,” we will know that we are doing what our Lord Jesus tells us. We are reminded that, following the example of the lives of the Saints and the teachings of the Church, we will experience everlasting life.

St. Luke’s account of Our Lord’s healing of the ten lepers<sup>v</sup> reminds us of what most of us were taught as children and that is to be grateful for what we have been given, especially for such great gifts as God’s sending to us of the Holy Spirit and the examples of faith and perseverance we have been given by the Saints. As young children, just as new Christians, we need to be reminded to say “Thank you,” but at some point, that gratitude must become a part of us. We should not have to be reminded to “At all times and in all places, give thanks and praise to God, the Father Almighty.”

I will be forever indebted, though to the Early Church and liturgists that have so wonderfully added this reminder many times throughout the Divine Liturgies. It is by these things that we can be assured that Jesus will tell us, also to “Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”<sup>vi</sup>

To Him be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Epistle at Mass on the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, 2011.

<sup>ii</sup> *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER* xix (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

<sup>iii</sup> *Amos* 5:4-15 (KJV).

<sup>iv</sup> *Galatians* 5:16-24 (KJV).

<sup>v</sup> *St. Luke* 17:12-18.

<sup>vi</sup> *St. Luke* 17:19 (KJV).

<sup>vii</sup> *Priest, The Diocese of New Orleans, The Anglican Catholic Church.*