

SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER

The Second Sunday after Trinityⁱ

Lessons:ⁱⁱ

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the fifth Verse of the sixth Chapter of the First Book of Moses, called Genesis.ⁱⁱⁱ

“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

“... And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

“Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the thirty-second Verse of the twenty-fourth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.^{iv}

“... Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe^v were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily:

When we first read or hear the words of today’s Second Lesson, they can seem a little more than upsetting. They can even be downright scary. These are some of the passages that plenty of folks use and have used to predict the time of Jesus’ Second Coming. A Doomsday prophecy and End of Days’ prediction can be constructed from them but, fortunately, in the Catholic churches we do not pick and choose texts from the Bible to formulate our own ideas on what Scripture means. We Catholic, or otherwise said, Universal, Christians use a liturgical cycle of lessons. These are lessons that have been set by the Church Universal for many, many years—in fact, in many cases, for more than a millenium.

In a liturgical cycle, we get to experience Christ as if we were living in the times that He was present on earth as a Man. We see His birth and all that knew Him from that point. We get to witness His miracles and His teachings. We are present at His death and Resurrection. We are His family and get to store in our hearts all of His life, lessons and miracles, like St. Luke reports the Blessed Virgin Mary did.

Today's Second Lesson reminds us of what it means to live a Christian life and just what the ultimate purpose of that life is. Many times, especially when someone dies, we hear that although they may not have attended church much; or even at all, but still, the deceased lived what is described as "a good Christian life."

Here is an interesting thought. A man can be a model husband, son, brother and friend. He can be honest and forthright, but Christianity does not necessarily have the market cornered on these traits. They are definite musts for a Christian, but anyone can be this way. It is even possible to live this way and claim to not be Christian or even a believer in any God.

In the two great Commandments in Jesus' Summary of the Law, this is the second one. The first is to love God with our whole heart, mind and soul. So yes, our conduct toward fellow man is important and necessary, but so is our conduct towards God. We are to worship and glorify Him. This is something that is done through our worship of Him. The essential part of Christian living is to worship God and look for His presence in the company of all of His children, with all the faithful believers.

Now let's look at some of the specifics of the Gospel message. As far as Christ's being solely in the desert or hidden away, Christians hold fast to the idea that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and that whenever two or more are gathered together in His name, He is present.

Think about this; is Christ like a lightning strike that can happen anywhere? I suppose an alternative question may answer this. Did the Son of God come as a quick flash of light and a clap of thunder and then disappear, or did He come as a light to the world, both gentile and Jew?

I believe that the answer to the second question is much more than sufficient. It is not in the character of the true believer to run off to somewhere every time someone says that Jesus is either just here or there. Only the simplest of minds would choose to believe that He can only be in one place at a time. God is limitless. He can do all things and is present in all things. We are warned not to be fooled by the evil one's claims that imply limitations on God.

By learning about and worshipping Him in the company of other believers, we learn how to show Him the respect that He deserves. We learn how to conduct ourselves with Him and with our fellow man. By knowing Him and all that He is, we are not enslaved by the belief that we should be running around searching for Him. This is why we are taught that it is right that we should, at all times and in all places, give Him thanks and praise.

With that said, here is a most proper ending: "To Him Be All Honor and Praise, World without End. Amen."

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The Rev'd George Parrish^{vi}
February 13, 2011

ⁱ *This sermon was originally written on the Gospel at Mass on the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, 2011.*

ⁱⁱ *Psalms and Lessons for the Church Year (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxvi (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Genesis 6: 5-8, 13-22 (KJV).*

^{iv} *St. Matthew 24:32-42 (KJV).*

^v *I.e., Noah.*

^{vi} *Priest, The Diocese of New Orleans, The Anglican Catholic Church.*