

SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER

The Second Sunday in Lent

Lessons:ⁱ

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the thirty-seventh Verse of the eighth Chapter of the First Book of the Kings.ⁱⁱ

“If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers. Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name’s sake; (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the twelfth Verse of the third Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Colossians.ⁱⁱⁱ

“... Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of

Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*”^{iv} In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

Lent isn’t only about *giving up*, it is about *taking on* new and holier habits. It is not about punishing ourselves, but is rather about changing ourselves into new and better people, not just for forty days, but for a lifetime.

We discussed last week how the season of Lent is not about “giving up” things we enjoy, but rather about giving up sin, and replacing it with acts of charity and love. This is why each of us is encouraged to plan out a rule of life for the Lenten season and to use this time to experiment with that rule. Then, if we find it helps us maintain a proper devotional climate, we can adopt it for use all year ‘round, not just for these few weeks.

In today’s Second Lesson, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to mutual love and compassion. We not only must learn to put off anger and wrath, but to replace it with compassion and kindness. We not only stop doing evil, but we must learn instead to do justice and charity towards all of God’s children.

We, the “*elect of God, holy and beloved,*” must put on what St. Paul calls “*bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering*” because we owe so much to the mercy of God. We are forgiven our sins, through the tender mercy of God, and should therefore show the same mercy to others. The bowels of mercies are the tenderest, the most profound and gentle of mercies.

We must show kindness to all those we encounter. Being kind involves not only kind words and acts, but also kind thoughts and reactions. This is how we reconcile all men to each other and to God. It is how we show forth Christ in our own lives.

We must have “*humbleness of mind,*” not resenting those above us nor glorying ourselves over those below. We are servants to all, after all. “*Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart,*” says our Lord.^v

We must have meekness, Paul says. We must not allow ourselves to respond to others in anger or hatred, even when we feel we have been provoked. Patiently controlling our own anger and bearing the anger of others is the mark of the Christian. Not only must we be meek, we must be “*long-suffering.*” We must display tolerance towards those who provoke us. Christ said we should forgive our brother not seven times, but seventy times seven.

As tiresome as it may be, as weary as we become, we must show the same kind of tolerance towards those who provoke us. God has been long-suffering with us, and we must exercise long-suffering to others.

Additionally, we must exercise forbearance towards one another. Each of us labors under all the stresses and strains of life. Each of us can on occasion be disagreeable. We may sometimes have quarrels with each other and it is important if we are to be the elect of God that we find ways to forgive and live with each other in peace. “... *[I]f any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye,*” says Paul. Jesus is our Lord, and our teacher. As He forgives us, we too must forgive. We declare this each Sunday in the Lord’s Prayer: “... *and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*”^{vi} If we wish to be

forgiven our sins, how could we fail to forgive the wins of others? We have a duty to forgive in these cases.

How can we achieve this task? How can we bring ourselves to forgive, to forbear, to be humble and kind to those with whom we are angry? First, we must clothe ourselves with love and charity. “*Above all things put on charity*,” Paul says. Brotherly love is the basis for all the rest. It becomes the centerpiece of the Christian life—the mark of the Christian by which the Christian is known. This is, Paul says, “*the bond of perfectness*.” It is the cement that bonds us to others in our Christian life.

When we hold others in Christian love and charity, we are following the commands of our Lord. One of the distinct marks of the Christian is that Christians tend to be at peace with others, not constantly fighting, squabbling, and disagreeing. Christians rather hold each other in magnanimity of spirit—forgiving each other their minor foibles, and yet always assisting each other. Often this assistance is in the form of teaching, praying for, and upholding each other.

Christians regard each other as brothers and sisters in spirit, as the family of God. As family members, we are bonded together in fealty (our sworn duty to God) and agape, the Greek term for the love of God for His people and their love returned to Him.

Then we can truly “*let the peace of God rule in your hearts*” because we are then able to live in God’s Peace. We are then at peace with each other and with God. We can then live in God’s favor. Each Sunday when we receive Holy Communion, we also receive the benediction which in part says, “The Peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”.^{vii}

This call to God’s people is universal. All of God’s children are called to live in the bonds of peace and love with one another. As Paul tells the Colossians, “... *you are called in one body*,” to live in peace. We know that we are part of the one body of Jesus Christ. As the parts of the body must be at peace with each other, as the branches of the vine

must grow in peace with each other, so must the people of God be at peace with each other.

We are each saints, led by the Prince of Peace. For this, Paul says, we should be thankful. It is our calling, our special mark, our covenant with God.

Last week I suggested to you all that Lent is about making change that lasts all your life, not just a few short weeks, and that Lent is a time for positive, joyful change rather than sullen painful mortification of our bodies.

So during this season of Lent, I offer you each this challenge. Each day, promote peace. Whether on a small scale, between two people, members of your family, friends, or even total strangers, or even on a larger scale, promote peace. Offer your help to find the peaceful, loving way to settle some difference.

Perhaps you can offer to your community, your city, county or state, a way to better handle some difficulty. This could be a new idea, a plan not thought of by anyone else, or even just a call to let our ideals lead us where our imagination sometimes fails.

Promote peace not in anger, not in harsh terms, but “*as the elect of God, holy and beloved, [with] bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another.*” And, as Paul concludes, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*”

Let us pray:

Lord, as we continue through this season of Lent, help us to see Your call to Christian love and peace as our rule of life. Grant to us that strength of character and grace to recognize the changes we need to make in our lives, and the courage to make them. Guide us always to do Your will in all we undertake, and let us be your peacemakers in the world. For your Blessed Name’s sake, we pray. Amen.

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ⁱ *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xviii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).*

ⁱⁱ *I Kings 8: 37-43 (KJV).*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Colossians 3:12-17 (KJV).*

^{iv} *Colossians 3:12-15 (KJV)*

^v *St. Matthew 11:29 (KJV).*

^{vi} *St. Matthew 6:12 (KJV).*

^{vii} *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER 84 (PECUSA 1928/1943).*

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