

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER¹

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity²

Lessons:³

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the eighth Chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy.⁴

“All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and

walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the eleventh Verse of the seventeenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke.⁵

“And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew [SHOW] yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “*And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.*”⁶ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon:

How do we give thanks to God?

What can we ever do that is sufficient to acknowledge the gifts, the grace, the glory of God? The truth is that there is nothing that we can do that is adequate to the task, but at the same time, there is no limit to what we should do to give Him thanks.

Our lives are filled every day with the works of God for which we should be giving thanks. The very facts that we live, that we have the ability to breathe, think, to move about in this glorious creation, are all worthy of our offering thanks to God.

Most of us are surrounded by people who matter a great deal to us: family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and of course our brothers and sisters in faith. For them too, we should give thanks to God, for He made them as He made us. If we are able to make an impact on the lives of others, surely this is a reason to give thanks to the Almighty. If we are given the gift of the ability to teach, to inspire, to heal, to nurture, or to lead, these are things that come from without, not within.

How do we give thanks to God for the people He has put in our lives? Sadly, we often take those very people and their presence for granted, forgetting that they are offered to us only for a time before God recalls them to Himself. How wonderful it would be if every day—at least once—we could take a moment to tell those people who are so very important to us how much they really matter – and to thank God for putting them into our lives.

In today's Second Lesson, our Lord, travelling towards Jerusalem, entered a village in Galilee where He came upon a group of ten lepers. These poor souls were afflicted with that disease today known as Hansen's Disease. Lepers were believed in that day to be untouchable, unclean. While they might share each other's company, they could not be among people not so afflicted. They were the "untouchables" of their day, not welcome anywhere and constrained to beg for their existence.

And so these lepers stood a way off from Jesus and His disciples and yelled to Him, "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.*"⁷ Perhaps they had heard of Jesus' miracles, or simply knew they He might have a kind word for them.

Jesus, when He saw them, followed the Levitical law concerning leprosy, commanding that the lepers should go show themselves to the priests, so that they might determine whether they were cured of their leprosy. While on the way to see the priests, the ten were surprised to see that their sores were cleared: they had been healed. But of the ten, only one, who is described as a Samaritan—which by itself made him a despised outcast among the Jews—thought to give thanks to God for his healing. That one turned back and returned to Jesus, fell at His feet and praised God for his healing.

Even in the face of a miracle—an event far beyond our human ability to explain it—most of the ten who Jesus healed did not recognize God’s hand in their cleansing. Perhaps they felt they were “owed” that healing. Maybe they thought Jesus was simply some kind of doctor. Maybe they resented that instead of simply declaring them healed, Jesus sent them to the priests for examination.

In any case, they did not see a reason to give thanks to God for the miracle that restored them to their families, to health and to society. They did not even see a reason to return to Jesus and thank Him for His intervention in their lives.

So often today, people behave in the same way. In the face of miracles, they seek some kind of human excuse to explain what has happened. They look for some way to rationalize that has happened, which might excuse them from the need to thank God for His gifts to them.

The one who sees God in all things is sometimes considered weird, or flighty. The person who thanks God for all things is often viewed as a bit delusional. And yet, we pray to God Who is above all, around all and in all, Who exists both in our past and in our future, and Who knows all things.

We might well ask whether it is the one who sees God in all who is confused, or whether it is we who somehow seem to want to restrict His presence and reality to only those times and places when we think we are ready for Him.

Perhaps the first step is to thank Him.

Let us pray.

Thank you Lord, for giving us life, in all its amazing diversity and wonder. We thank You that we do need You in all things, and that You are there at all times and in all places. As we pray each Sunday, it is meet and right and our bounden duty that we should in all times and in all places give thanks unto You. Help us to always be aware Lord that we do need You in all things, and to keep our eyes open to your grace in all our lives. This we ask through the infinite mercy of thy Son our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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The Rev. Larry Wagoner, MSW⁸
September 1, 2013

¹ “Any set of Psalms and Lessons appointed for the evening of any day may be read at the morning service, and any set of morning Psalms and Lessons may be read in the evening.” *Concerning the Service of the Church*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER viii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

² This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion on the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, 2013.

³ *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxiii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

⁴ Deuteronomy 8:1-14, 17-20 (KJV).

⁵ St. Luke 17:11-19 (KJV).

⁶ St. Luke 17:14-19 (KJV).

⁷ St. Luke 17:13 (KJV).

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