

so surrender we “*shall not enter the kingdom of God.*”, never mind be a holy disciple of Jesus.

Instead we must live lives that produce the “*...fruit of the Spirit...*” This is the substance of the life of a holy disciple of Jesus. Let us note the stark contrast between the two and not be deceived into compromise.

Jesus gave all of Himself, dying for our sins. And so we now are, by grace, to die to ourselves, to live as those who know “I am not my own”, and to give all we are to Jesus for His exclusive use and glory.

As we do we will reach our destined end and what the Father has recreated us in Christ for: holiness. *Amen.*

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¹ This sermon was originally written on the Epistle for Holy Communion on the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, 2012.

² *An Alternative Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised in 1928)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, WITH THE ADDITIONS AND DEVIATIONS PROPOSED IN 1928 38 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxi (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxix (CIPBC 1963).

³ Isaiah 11:1-9 (KJV).

⁴ Ezekiel 36:22-36 (KJV).

⁵ Galatians 5:13-end (KJV).

⁶ Galatians 5:16 (KJV).

⁷ Rector, St. Thomas of Canterbury Anglican Catholic Church, Roanoke, Virginia.

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER Pentecost, commonly called Whitsunday¹

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the eleventh Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.³

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

Or,

Here beginneth the twenty-second Verse of the thirty-sixth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel.⁴

“... Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith [SETH] the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned

among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith [SETH] the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith [SETH] the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith [SETH] the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

Too many times in my life, for sure. But it need not be that way, certainly not from this day forward! And it won't be that way if we stop tolerating sympathy and excuses for ourselves for not striving to be holy! We can never tolerate any practice that is not in keeping with the holiness of God. Holiness is faultless and blameless walking with the feet, talking with the tongue, and thinking with the mind. It means being set apart in thought, word and deed for God's exclusive use.

Again, this is not something just for “special Christians!” By our baptism, each of us has been called to be a disciple of Jesus, and in our confirmation each of us has accepted the call to be a disciple of Jesus. Disciples of Jesus must be holy as Jesus is holy. Jesus was set apart for the Father's exclusive use. He was the spotless Lamb of God who was set a part to take away the sins of the world to take away *our* sins.

As disciples of Jesus we, too, are called to be set apart for God's exclusive use. Not to take away the sins of the world but to live and proclaim to everyone the Good News that *Jesus* has taken away the sins of the world.

We are to use all the Father has made us to be and given us for our use to glorify Jesus Christ. We are by grace to strive and abandon ourselves totally to Christ, by battling against anything and everything that prevents us from being holy.

This is a challenge to be sure. It takes our full time and attention all day, every day of our lives. But then the salvation God promises us in Christ will be all day, every day for all eternity.

Today's Second Lesson ends with these words: “...*they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.*” Holiness means no longer surrendering to “*works of the flesh*” like the ones St. Paul lists in the Lesson, because if we do

ing. Instead, I've created my own personal definition of discipleship, one that is comfortable for my conscience and doesn't offer any challenge to it.

Instead of taking head on and by grace the sins that block my path to true discipleship, I deceive myself into believing I can be a true disciple *with* sin in my life, or redefine what sin is and deceive myself.

If the resentment we feel in our spirit when we hear the Gospel preached creates that reaction, we are off track. But if the resentment we feel motivates us into action, action (again always by grace) to take the sin blocking our paths to true discipleship head on, then that is a good thing.

Hebrews 4:12 states "...*the word of God is quick (living) and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner (a judge) of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" In the life of a disciple of Jesus, God's Word convicts, challenges, instructs and directs us how to live as true disciples.

It shows us what total abandonment and daily striving look like in the life of a true disciple. It leads us to see and know that "I am not my own." St. James 1:23, 24 states "*For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass (a mirror); For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*"

St. James is saying Scripture is a mirror that shows us what a disciple of Jesus looks like. What do we see when we look into that mirror? Or, how many times as we read Scripture do we understand who we are to be and at that moment become motivated and committed to striving to be what we are called to be, but then, as soon as our Bible has been put away, we go right back to our unholy ways?

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the thirteenth Verse of the fifth Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Galatians.⁵

"... For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill 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. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: "*I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*"⁶ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

The destined end of man is holiness. It is for this that the Father has recreated us in Christ. In 1 Peter 1:16, Christians are commanded: “*Be ye holy; for I am holy.*” St. Peter is quoting from Leviticus 11:44, where God warned the Israelites to stay away from those things which would defile them and make them unholy.

In spite of God’s plain commands, we place any number of ends before holiness: our own happiness, health, peace, prosperity, *etc.* In themselves, none of those other ends are bad. None of them are evil. They are not bad or evil, that is, as long as they come second to holiness and don’t block or obscure our path to it.

Ultimately, there is only one thing that *really* matters in life, and that is for every person, by grace through faith, to receive the God (Jesus Christ) Who can, Who does, and Who will make them holy.

At all costs, every person, each woman and man, must be rightly related to God in this way. We have to receive Christ as Savior and Lord, and then as Lord, we have to submit to His Holy Spirit, and we have to and allow Him to make us holy.

What is “holiness?” What does being “*holy*” mean? The Greek word translated into English as “holy” is *hagios* [**uh-GUY-oss**] which means “*set apart.*” *Hagios* [**uh-GUY-oss**] was the word used for the altar sacrifices. They were “set apart” for the purpose of sacrifice.

The theological definition of holiness is: “...*the devotion and purity of life associated with Christian discipleship, in which one lives according to God’s will and exhibits that commitment in all areas of behavior.*”

A holy person is someone who, in receiving Christ as Savior, is set apart for God’s exclusive use, and utilizes the grace he or she is given to live life according to God’s Word,

and to demonstrate that commitment in all areas of his or her behavior. A holy person is one who is committed to being a disciple of Jesus Christ in every area of life: in thought, word and deed.

A holy person is one who has reached the realization “I am not my own, I belong exclusively to Jesus Christ for His use and His glory.” Holiness is not just for “special Christians.” Each of us is called by Baptism, and even more so in Confirmation, to be holy disciples of Jesus. In fact, there can be no such thing as an “unholy disciple”.

While all disciples struggle to demonstrate the necessary commitment to be holy in *every* area of life, by grace they strive daily to overcome whatever obscures their path. This struggle may take place throughout their entire lives, but so long as they continue by grace to strive and not give up, Jesus will continue to receive them among His disciples.

Our Lord’s standard for His disciples is not perfection. He knows we are sinners who will fall short on occasion. His standard is *total* abandonment and *daily* striving. If we are not willing to commit by faith to both of those, we will not be holy (set apart) and cannot be numbered among His disciples.

Do we believe we need to be holy? Do we believe God can really come into our lives and make us holy?

In my preaching, I am called to convince you (and myself), that as baptized Christian-disciples of Jesus Christ, we *must* become and be holy. Does that type of preaching cause resentment in your spirit? If it does, that is not a bad thing, depending on what you do with it.

The preaching of the Gospel will often awaken an intense resentment because it reveals to us who we truly are. I may call myself a disciple, and yet I’m not living up to Jesus’ standard for a disciple with *total* abandonment and *daily* striving.