
PROPOSED IN 1928 36 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxix (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxvii (CIPBC 1963).

³ Exodus 32:1-end (KJV).

⁴ Exodus 33:7-end (KJV).

⁵ Isaiah 56:1-8 (KJV).

⁶ St. John 21:1-end (KJV).

⁷ I John 3:17.

⁸ E.g., St. John 21:20.

⁹ St. John 19:30.

¹⁰ I John 2:1, 2.

¹¹ St. John 8:31, 32.

¹² St. John 1:29.

¹³ St. John 20:26-28.

¹⁴ St. Luke 24:38, 39.

¹⁵ St. John 1:14.

¹⁶ St. John 14:9.

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SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER The Second Sunday after Easter¹

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the thirty-second Chapter of the Second Book of Moses, called Exodus.³

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt

with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

“And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

“And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

“And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said,

The Church is described uniquely in the opening of St. John’s First Epistle. It is the very fellowship of all who believe the Apostles who had seen, and who had touched with their hands, the Word of Life. The implications are quite clear, that by believing the word taught by the Apostles, and touching the same Lord in His Sacraments, we have fellowship with those Apostles across the barriers of time, fellowship with the Incarnate Christ who is the head of the Body, with God the Father, and with each other.

It is said that when he was elderly, John was carried about on a stretcher, unable to walk anymore. When he would arrive in a city he would go into the church, gather his strength, and say simply: “Love one another.” This would have been no mere sentiment, no empty phrase, or idealism. He had lived through many deaths, his colleagues dying one after another as martyrs (beginning with his brother James); and now he survived to be the last of the Apostles. More importantly, he had seen his Lord die on the cross. He knew that same Lord to be alive, and to be present by His Spirit in the Church. For this old man to have said “love one another” was to speak volumes, to speak words filled with their own glorious weight of meaning, filled with the revelation of the Word made flesh.

So, let it be for us, a phrase filled with all the same meaning, a standard for every genuine Christian theologian and teacher, a standard for every beloved disciple.

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The Rev’d Robert Hart¹⁷
December 27, 2009

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Epistle and Gospel for Mass on the Feast of St. John Evangelist, 2009.

² *An Alternative Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised in 1928)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, WITH THE ADDITIONS AND DEVIATIONS

The Resurrection. Indeed, in the opening of his First Epistle John writes in such a way as to give us a completed picture of Christ, that He is God the Word, that He has passed through death, and has risen. For, only after His Resurrection are we given specific words in Scripture to touch the body with His scars of death: “And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith [SETH] he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”¹³

As also St. Luke records, about the Risen Lord Jesus appearing to them: “And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”¹⁴

So, it is all of one, one seamless garment of the love of God revealed in Christ. St. John writes of the mystery of God in opening his Gospel, where he writes of the Word (λογος) [LOW-ghowss] who is God, one with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, through whom all things have been made, taking us to that Holy of Holies within the Holy Scriptures: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”¹⁵

Within *the Holy of Holies* in the Old Covenant Temple, the glory was hidden to all but the High Priest, once a year and not without blood. In the revelation above every other revelation, the direct revelation of God in the Incarnate Word, in Jesus Christ very God and very man, that glory is seen by all. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”¹⁶ And this High Priest, the Incarnate God, the Lamb slain, the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, may show the glory to all who will believe, and not without His own blood, which had been shed as the Lamb of God.

Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith [SETH] the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

“And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.”

Or,

Here beginneth the seventh Verse of the thirty-third Chapter of the Second Book of Moses, called Exodus.⁴

“... And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp. And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle. And it came

to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

“And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew [SHOW] me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, shew [SHOW] me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew [SHOW] mercy on whom I will shew [SHOW] mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.”

Or,

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John describes the effect of that death in these words: “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”¹⁰ He writes to open the door to everyone, that all who believe will also know that love, and also know what it means to be the disciple whom Jesus loved. See the Lord lifted up from the earth on His Cross, and know that you are also, if you will learn the truth that makes you free, the disciple whom Jesus loved;¹¹ for He loved you from His Cross of death when He canceled out *your* debt of sin.

And so he tells each of us that God’s love is so great that we can enter the fellowship of those who have heard, who have seen with their eyes, who have looked upon, and whose hands have handled the Word of Life. He dwelt among us because of what was made known to this one Apostle, that the Lord loved him. He could write of that love only in the great eternal and universal themes of his Gospel:

The Incarnation and the Trinity. The love of God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, is revealed in the uncreated eternally begotten Person of the Son among us, sharing our created nature as human beings and speaking of the other Paraclete to come. This double theme of the Trinity and the Incarnation permeates his writings, and those same writings rest on this double theme as a foundation.

The Atonement. As with every presentation of the Gospel, the facts are presented clearly, that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day appearing to witnesses who saw Him alive. John writes of John the Baptist identifying the Lord as the true Passover, slain to free us from sin and death: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”¹² He is the one who suffered and died to take away our sins.

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he speaks directly to the most material needs, the necessities of the body in our duty to the poor among us: “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”⁷

And this is not forced and awkward; it is not a sudden change of subject, or a redirection of thought. It all flows together; it is of one part, combined most naturally by a single thought, the love of God. And who better than John “the disciple whom Jesus loved”,⁸ to unlock this mystery in his writing? The meaning of this phrase, “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” can be reduced, by immature thinking, to some form of favoritism, or simple friendship.

But in light of the great themes of his writing, the Apostle was more likely to have been letting us in on revelation that made him the Theologian. He saw in everything that Jesus taught and did that inexpressible love beyond all human imagination. He saw it as the Lord was going about teaching and healing. He saw it as the Lord washed the feet of the Apostles on the night in which He was betrayed. He saw it as he stood and beheld the agonies of Christ dying on the cross, willingly giving His life. He saw it when the Lord appeared after His resurrection to extend grace and mercy. To John it was this love that opened his eyes so wide that he could write, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

John saw the love of God in Christ, for he had stood at the foot of the Lord’s Cross when He died. Writing of this, the revelation of God’s love from the Cross for all mankind, John takes that love personally by so describing himself: “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He knew that Jesus loved him, for he saw the Lord die for him, in his place, and cancel out forever the debt of his, of John’s, sin: “It is finished”⁹ (τελειω) [**teal-EE-awss**].

Here beginneth the fifty-sixth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.⁵

“Thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

“Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord GOD, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith [**SETH**], Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the twenty-first Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.⁶

“After these things Jesus shewed [**SHOWD**] himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed [**SHOWD**] he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

Simon Peter saith **[SETH]** unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith **[SETH]** unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith **[SETH]** unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith **[SETH]** unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith **[SETH]** unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed **[SHOWD]** himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith **[SETH]** to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith **[SETH]** unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith **[SETH]** unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith **[SETH]** to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith **[SETH]** unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith **[SETH]** unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith **[SETH]** unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith **[SETH]** unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I

say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith **[SETH]** unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith **[SETH]** to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith **[SETH]** unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily:

The beloved Disciple, Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist, has set a standard for every genuine Christian theologian. How glorious and sublime his words, how enlightened his understanding, how profound his teaching; and yet his feet are planted in the real world. He opens his First Epistle as he opens his Gospel, speaking of the mysteries of God as they are revealed and made known to His Church through the Apostles and their teaching.

He speaks of high and heavenly things, of mysteries beyond human comprehension, of truth so profound we can but scratch the surface, of mysteries hitherto locked away from the dawn of time, and now made known. Yet, in the same Epistle,