

SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER
The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity¹

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the twenty-second Chapter of the Second of the Kings, commonly called the Fourth Book of the Kings.³

“Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Jedidah [***dgih-DYE-duh***], the daughter of Adaiah [***uh-DYE-uh***] of Boscath [***BAHS-kath***]. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

“And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan [***SHAY-fan***] the son of Azaliah [***az-uh-LYE-uh***], the son of Meshullam [***mih-SHUHL-um***], the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying, Go up to Hilkiyah [***hill-KYE-uh***] the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people: And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD: and let them give it to the doers of the work which is in the house of the LORD, to repair the breaches of the house, Unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully.

“And Hilkiyah [***hill-KYE-uh***] the high priest said unto Shaphan [***SHAY-fan***] the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah [***hill-KYE-uh***] gave the book to Shaphan [***SHAY-fan***], and he read it. And Shaphan [***SHAY-fan***] the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD. And Shaphan [***SHAY-fan***] the scribe shewed

[SHOWD] the king, saying, Hilkiyah [hill-KYE-uh] the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan [SHAY-fan] read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiyah [hill-KYE-uh] the priest, and Ahikam [uh-HIGH-kam] the son of Shaphan [SHAY-fan], and Achbor [AK-bawr] the son of Michaiah [mye-KYE-uh], and Shaphan [SHAY-fan] the scribe, and Asahiah [ass-uh-HIGH-uh] a servant of the king's, saying, Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us. So Hilkiyah [hill-KYE-uh] the priest, and Ahikam [uh-HIGH-kam], and Achbor [AK-bawr], and Shaphan [SHAY-fan], and Asahiah [ass-uh-HIGH-uh], went unto Huldah [HOOL-duh] the prophetess, the wife of Shallum [SHALL-umm] the son of Tikvah [TICK-vuh], the son of Harhas [HARR-hass], keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

“And she said unto them, Thus saith [SETH] the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith [SETH] the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith [SETH] the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith [SETH] the LORD. Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion on the Fifth 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 42 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxvi (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxv (CIPBC 1963).

³ II Kings 22:1-end (KJV).

⁴ Habakkuk 2:1-14 (KJV).

⁵ St. Luke 4:31--5:11 (KJV).

⁶ St. Luke 5:8 & 10b (KJV).

⁷ Isaiah 6:1-11 (KJV).

cious treasure in an earthen vessel, each one bearing Christ Himself, to show forth by deeds, and in some cases by words, wisdom and power that do not come from your own strength.

And, in another mystery, each week when we celebrate the Eucharist we come face to face with God. The bread and the cup of which we then partake are the Body and Blood of Christ. We dare not approach them except we first, with hearty repentance and true faith, confess our sins, and hear the words of forgiveness. And so, we need not say to Christ “*depart from me*” because we know that, in confessing and forsaking our sins, we find mercy.

We have communion with the Incarnate and Risen Christ in a mystery beyond our understanding. He is not simply hidden away in heaven. He is here on earth, both in the little boat of your daily life as well as in the temple of our prayers. He has made known His presence, ultimately as He has come in the Flesh, died and risen again; and He has sent His Holy Spirit to empower His Church with gifts of service. And, He comes in the Blessed Sacrament, in gifts and creatures of bread and wine that become His Body and Blood.

When you return from the house of the Lord into the daily common places, the fishing boats of your life, remember that upon seeing His glory and receiving His cleansing, you have heard His call. By the life you live this week, among all sorts and conditions of men, you are going out to tell this people. As Christ our Lord said to Peter on his boat, we may hear Him say to us. “*Fear not.*” We are henceforth going out to catch men.

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The Rev’d Robert Hart
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fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.”

Or,

Here beginneth the second Chapter of Habakkuk.⁴

“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov’d. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

“Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men’s blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

“Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

“Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall

wearily themselves for very vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

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

“... And [Jesus] came down to Capernaum [*kuh-PURR-nay-umm*], a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

“And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

“And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon’s house. And Simon’s wife’s mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

“Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom

“Spirituality” can be a morally empty word, especially if we consider that Satan has been a spirit far longer than any of us have been alive. We need to remember instead that Saint Paul, in his Epistles, tells us that all Christians have one vocation in common. No matter who we are, we are all “*called to be saints*.” That is, we are called to become holy. In comparison, it is the easy way out to choose a thing called “spirituality” instead of this revelation about the Christian life and vocation. And, as we see, the only way to start on the path to holiness is by seeing the truth about our own sins in light of the fact that God is present here on earth. The earth is full of His glory—therefore it is full of His presence. This is so whether we see His glory or fail to see it.

When Isaiah said “*Woe is me*” and when Peter said “*Depart from me*,” each man suddenly very aware of God’s holiness, and each convicted of his own sin in the light of that holiness and awful Presence, the answer to each came in the call to ministry. Forgiveness was more than implied; cleansing and purification were also more than implied. We are reminded every time we have this service of Holy Communion, that the full price for our sins was paid by Christ Himself, and that forgiveness is no mere sentimental thing; it was granted to us by His suffering and death on the Cross. But, also, we are called to ministry—that is, to service. Now, obviously, not all Christians are called to the ordained ministry.

But, as the Epistles of Saint Paul point out, we have all been given gifts by which we serve God, serve one another and both show forth and tell His word to the world around us. It is an old tradition to refer to the sacrament of Confirmation as the ordination of the Laity. That sacrament is not a rite of passage, or simply a ticket to Holy Communion. Based upon the Book of Acts, the theology of Confirmation is this: through laying on of the apostle’s hands the Holy Ghost is given. In short, that means that when you were confirmed you were given gifts from Christ, concerning which you yourself may be unaware. You, each of you who have received that sacrament, are carrying pre-

world. The Temple, as he knew, was the place of God's presence, but hidden behind a veil in the *Kadesh h' Kadeshim* [**kah-DESH huh-kah-desh-EEM**]*—the Holy of Holies where only the High Priest could go, once a year and not without blood. With God in heaven and behind a veil, life feels safe. "God is in his heaven, All's right with the world."* Even the Temple felt comfortable as long as God kept His distance, safely behind the veil. But, suddenly, Isaiah saw Him, not only as the God of heaven. He saw the Lord here on earth.

One might even ask, what was God doing here where, surely, He doesn't belong? It is most unsettling. So, with Simon Peter, the Lord is not any longer only behind the veil, or hidden away on His heavenly throne. He is here, present in the flesh, standing before Peter in his own boat. Into this little wooden craft—a whole world of daily work, sweating, toiling and all the anxieties of normal life, where Peter and Andrew were accustomed to their routine—comes the *Shekinah* [**shih-KYE-nuh**], the visible presence of God, the Word made Flesh. As for Isaiah centuries before, it was terrifying for man to see that God is here, on earth, present in the world, and present in our own world. Like Isaiah of old, Peter knew one thing above all else at that moment. He was a sinner, a man of unclean lips, not worthy of this Presence before which he found himself.

And, that is a good place to begin. When people are influenced by New Age thinking, that, as they think, a thing called spirituality is better than a thing called religion, their outlook is clouded. A culture that cannot accept moral standards, with churches that no longer teach the commandments of God, exalts a morally neutral concept, a thing called "spirituality." "Spirituality"—a word without definition and context—should ring hollow in your ears, as Christians. When you hear people speak of being spiritual, without the effort to be holy—if I may borrow a popular phrase from the movie world—they give in to the Dark Side.

of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

"And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret [**geh-NESS-uh-rett**], And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him."

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Gospel: "*When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man... and Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*"⁶ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

To come face to face with God, in such a way that we recognize Him, brings us to the realization of our own unworthiness, of our own sins. We know from the Gospel of John that Simon had already met Jesus, and was aware that He was a holy man. Andrew, Simon's brother and partner in their fishing business, had declared his belief that Jesus was the Messiah.

Simon was ready and willing, as we see, to defer to Jesus, to give Him use of his boat, and even to follow His instructions about a matter that must have been, as this fisherman would have thought, outside the expertise of a carpenter and rabbi. Nonetheless, at the Lord's word, out of respect for Him, and perhaps out of affection for Andrew as well, Simon Peter went out and let down the nets, despite what a wasted effort fishing proved to be all night long. But, in what happened next he saw that this Rabbi was in command of nature, and that even the fish in the Sea obeyed Him.

The Old Testament has a companion text, in the sixth chapter of the book of the prophet Isaiah. Like Simon Peter, Isaiah was going about his daily routine. The vision he saw took him by surprise. As he wrote it:

“In the year that king Uzziah [uzz-ZYE-uh] died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the

seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And He said unto me, Go and tell this people Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.”⁷

He saw the Lord, and heard the angels cry, “*Holy, Holy, Holy*”—three times crying “*holy*”; once for each Person of the Trinity, for the Father and for the Son and for the Holy Spirit. Because he saw God, Isaiah was aware of his own sins. “*Woe is me. I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips.*” As Simon, centuries later, would fall down at the knees of Jesus, saying “*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man,*” we see that Isaiah was suddenly overcome by the knowledge that he was not worthy to be in the presence of the Holy God of Israel.

Isaiah already knew, as later Simon also knew, that God is holy; and each of them knew of his own shortcomings; and even though centuries apart, each of them was, in his own time, suddenly face to face with God. Face to face with the Holy God who is like a refiner's fire—indeed, as everyone will be if only at the Last Day, when He comes again in glory to judge the quick and the dead.

The angels in the Temple cried “*the whole earth is full of His glory.*” We can go about our daily lives in great comfort, in a state of relative calm, because the idea of the Lord upon a heavenly throne keeps Him just a bit distant, maybe even too far away to notice the every day sins we allow ourselves to get away with—or so we think.

But Isaiah saw Him upon the earth, the earth that was, as he heard the angels say, “*full of His glory.*” That glory was not only an ethereal glory, for he saw God, present here in this