

**SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER**  
**The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity<sup>1</sup>**

**Lessons:<sup>2</sup>**

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the twenty-third Verse of the thirty-first Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.<sup>3</sup>

“... Thus saith [SETH] the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

“Behold, the days come, saith [SETH] the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith [SETH] the LORD. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

“Behold, the days come, saith [SETH] the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith [SETH] the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith [SETH] the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no

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<sup>2</sup> *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 43 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxviii (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxvii (CIPBC 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 31:23-37 (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> I Peter 2:11—3:7 (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> St. Matthew 23:7.

<sup>6</sup> I Corinthians 12:27.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 12:2.

<sup>8</sup> Rector, St. Benedict’s Anglican Catholic Church, Chapel Hill, NC.

more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith [SETH] the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

“Thus saith [SETH] the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith [SETH] the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith [SETH] the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith [SETH] the LORD.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the eleventh Verse of the second Chapter of First Epistle General of St. Peter.<sup>4</sup>

“... Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief,

went to the House of Cornelius to see Pentecost repeated and the Holy Spirit poured out on Gentiles. It is also right for us to see that, even today, there remain yet other sheep, not of this fold, who need to be brought in.

The work is far from over, and each of you may have a share of that work. Because “you are the Body of Christ and members in particular,”<sup>6</sup> each endowed with special gifts for ministry by the Holy Spirit, you are called to share the work of bringing in those other sheep. And that is a win-win proposition. It is good for the parish, and good for them, indeed, a life-line sent out to them.

If we are to work in God’s field with all the mess sheep bring, and the dangers presented by the wolf, we need not worry about finding the Cross. It always finds us if we are faithful to Christ. It will be there; that I can promise each of you. The Cross, in some form or other, is all that the fallen sinful world has for true servants of Jesus Christ. Not honor, respect or esteem; the Cross. So, you don’t need to go looking for the Cross, because the world is quite aggressive in providing it. Like the Son of God, who endured the Cross, and thought nothing of the shame of the Cross, for the joy set before Him,<sup>7</sup> may each of you have grace to endure, to hope, and to follow in His footsteps. The suffering is but for a moment; the joy is eternal.

On His Cross, the Good Shepherd died for us; and by His Cross He showed to us how to follow Him on the path of Life.

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The Rev’d Robert Hart<sup>8</sup>  
April 22, 2012

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Epistle and Gospel for Mass on the Second Sunday after Easter, 2012.

The Lord spoke clearly of the difference between a true shepherd and a mere hireling, “whose own the sheep are not.” The Church has had its fill of hirelings. We know that the Church must tend to business in this world. Indeed, every family must conduct business. We all must have a place to live, food on the table, and utilities. So the Church, like every family, must engage in a certain amount of practical business. Jesus sent His disciples to buy the things needed for the Passover; every family must conduct these practical matters of business.

But, though the Church must take care of a certain amount of necessary practical matters of business, the Church is not *a* business. We are not here to earn a profit (and thank God, because we would be failures if we had to be judged by the criteria of the marketplace). And, the work of the clergy is to serve as shepherds, and so carry on the work of Jesus Himself. It is to care for God’s people, not to devour them, and not to abandon them in the face of danger, like the hireling who sees the wolf coming, and flees.

Some men receive Holy Orders and become hirelings; and, if they are not hirelings for money, they may be hirelings for something else. I see, sometimes, young men who were ordained much too early, and who imagine that the priesthood will give them status and prestige. They love the title, they love the vestments, and, they remind me all too often of the words of Jesus, about the Pharisees who loved greetings in the market-places, and to be called of men, *Rabbi*.<sup>5</sup> Well, if they stick long enough, they find the Cross that they cannot get around. That is when they find out if they were ordained for the right reason.

Look at the closing words of the Gospel for that Good Shepherd Sunday: “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd.” I have no doubt that this speaks mainly about the inclusion of the Gentiles, the grafting in of non-Jews to the cultivated olive tree of Israel. These words only started to be fulfilled when St. Peter

suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

### **Homily:**

The Second Lesson we read today is drawn, as I hope many of you have noticed, from that very famous Suffering Servant passage in the book of Isaiah, specifically chapters

52:13--53:12. I have said before that the Suffering Servant passage goes beyond Christ's atoning death, predicting as well His Resurrection by telling us that He would, after death, "prolong his days" as the agent of God's Will. It predicts the day of Pentecost by telling us that Christ would "divide the spoil with the strong." This echoes words from Psalm 68:18: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men."

But as the chapter draws to a close, the prophet takes us back to the Cross, because that was the main thrust of this particular passage. In this way the Holy Spirit reminds us, through the prophetic oracle, that all of the grace, and, indeed *every* gift, that God gives to us has come by way of the Cross of Christ. St. Anselm taught that Christ did all the work, and after earning a great reward for His labor, gives away all of the benefits of His work. He gives all of the earning, profit and reward to us. For He is God the Son, and has need of nothing.

The emphasis of that passage is what Jesus did for us, and very importantly, what He did as *the One for the Many*. And I can think of no better summary of that prophetic passage about the sacrifice Jesus offered of His own life, than the words of St. Paul from the fifth chapter of Romans:

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

So, we get that message, that Jesus died for our sins just as scripture foretold. St. Peter puts it to us with great force: "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." That's the first message. Christ offered Himself as the Lover of

mankind, in fact, as the one who loves you. He is the sacrifice not just for the whole world, but for you; dying as much for *each* as for *all*. This is why I tell you so often: when you look up at the Crucifix where He pours out His soul unto death, and you see His love there, take it personally.

Today's Second Lesson includes the passage that is assigned as the Epistle on the Second Sunday after Easter, which is often referred to as "Good Shepherd Sunday". When we pray the Collect that day, we ask for understanding and for grace to see in His death two very important things that go together. This is what we then pray: "Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavor ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through the same, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*" This Collect is itself drawn from that Epistle, that is, from today's Second Lesson.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not: but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray: but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

This follows an exhortation to be patient when suffering wrongfully. "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." Peter tells us that when we follow Christ our Lord, we may expect to find the Cross awaiting us. When we find it, and find no way around it, we may embrace it as the will of God, just as Jesus did.