

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER
The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

Lessons:¹

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the thirty-fifth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.²

“The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim [***dg**eh-**HOY-uh-kim***] the son of Josiah [***dg**oh-**SIGH-uh***] king of Judah, saying, Go unto the house of the Rechabites [***REE-kab-ights***], and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. Then I took Jaazaniah [***jay-az-uh-NYE-uh***] the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah [***HAB-uh-zih-NYE-uh***], and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites [***REE-kab-ights***]; And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan [***HAY-nan***], the son of Igdaliah [***ig-duh-LYE-uh***], a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah [***may-uh-SIGH-uh***] the son of Shallum [***SHALL-um***], the keeper of the door: And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites [***REE-kab-ights***] pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab [***REE-kab***], our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab [***REE-kab***] our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar [***neb-you-kad-REZ-ur***] king of Babylon came up

into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans [*kal-DEE-unz*], and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

“Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith [**SETH**] the LORD. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab [**REE-kab**], that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father’s commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab [**REE-kab**] have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: Therefore thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.

“And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites [**REE-kab-ights**], Thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: Therefore thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab [**REE-kab**] shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.”

Or,

Here beginneth the thirty-sixth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.³

“And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] the son of Josiah [**dgoh-SIGH-uh**] king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah [**dgoh-SIGH-uh**], even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. Then Jeremiah called Baruch [**BAY-rook**] the son of Neriah [**neh-RYE-uh**]: and Baruch [**BAY-rook**] wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch [**BAY-rook**], saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD: Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD’s house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities. It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people. And Baruch [**BAY-rook**] the son of Neriah [**neh-RYE-uh**] did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD’s house. And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] the son of Josiah [**dgoh-SIGH-uh**] king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem. Then read Baruch [**BAY-rook**] in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah [**dgem-uh-RYE-uh**] the

son of Shaphan [**SHAY-fan**] the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house, in the ears of all the people.

“When Michaiah [**my-KYE-uh**] the son of Gemariah [**dgem-uh-RYE-uh**], the son of Shaphan [**SHAY-fan**], had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD, Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama [**ih-LISH-uh-muh**] the scribe, and Delaiah [**dih-LYE-uh**] the son of Shemaiah [**shih-MAY-uh**], and Elnathan [**el-NAY-thun**] the son of Achbor [**AK-bore**], and Gemariah [**dgem-uh-RYE-uh**] the son of Shaphan [**SHAY-fan**], and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah [**han-uh-NYE-uh**], and all the princes. Then Michaiah [**my-KYE-uh**] declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch [**BAY-rook**] read the book in the ears of the people. Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi [**dgih-HYOO-dye**] the son of Nethaniah [**neth-uh-NYE-uh**], the son of Shelemiah [**shell-uh-MY-uh**], the son of Cushi [**KYOO-shy**], unto Baruch [**BAY-rook**], saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch [**BAY-rook**] the son of Neriah [**neh-RYE-uh**] took the roll in his hand, and came unto them. And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch [**BAY-rook**] read it in their ears. Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch [**BAY-rook**], We will surely tell the king of all these words. And they asked Baruch [**BAY-rook**], saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth? Then Baruch [**BAY-rook**] answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book. Then said the princes unto Baruch [**BAY-rook**], Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

“And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama [**ih-LISH-uh-muh**] the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. So the king sent Jehudi [**dgih-HYOO-dye**] to fetch the

¹² Hebrews 1:1-2 (RS).

¹³ BENEDICT XVI, THE WORD OF THE LORD: *VERBUM DOMINI*, Art. 11 (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media 2010), quoting BENEDICT XVI, ENCYCLICAL LETTER *DEUS CARITAS EST*, 1: AAS 98 (2006), 217-218.

¹⁴ BENEDICT XVI, *VERBUM DOMINI*, Art. 6, quoting SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *DEI VERBUM*, 2.

¹⁵ PAUL VI, APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *EVANGELII NUNTIANDI* (December 8, 1975): AAS 68 (1976), 20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

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will not be drawn to Him. Thus we must both recognize this truth and pray for strength to abide by it, for which there are no better words than those of the late, and saintly, Archbishop Michael Dean Stephens, which many of our parishes use as a closing “choir prayer” at the end of each Eucharist:

“Go with us, O heavenly Father, into the world. Mold us, make us, and shape us into the Image of Christ, that men may take notice that we have been with Jesus, and so join with us in thy house to praise His holy Name, who died and rose again for us, thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

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The Rev'd Canon John A. Hollister¹⁷
April 21, 2013.

¹ *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).

² Jeremiah 35:1-end (KJV).

³ Jeremiah 36:1-end (KJV).

⁴ St. John 14:1-end (KJV).

⁵ St. John 14:10b-11 (RSV).

⁶ In European usage, “Evangelical” usually means “Lutheran”.

⁷ In that same context, “Reformed” is usually code for “Calvinist”.

⁸ *Cf. Article XII Of Good Works, Articles of Religion*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER 605 (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

⁹ Here, “evangelical” is used in the sense of “spreading the Gospel”.

¹⁰ St. Matthew 11:27; St. John 1:18, 6:46; Acts 4:12.

¹¹ HERBERT G. MAY & BRUCE M. METZGER, eds., THE NEW OXFORD ANNOTATED BIBLE WITH THE APOCRYPHA, REVISED STANDARD VERSION 1308 fn. 4-7 & 8-11 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1977).

roll: and he took it out of Elishama [**ih-LISH-uh-muh**] the scribe’s chamber. And Jehudi [**dgih-HYOO-dye**] read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi [**dgih-HYOO-dye**] had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. Nevertheless Elnathan [**el-NAY-thun**] and Delaiah [**dih-LYE-uh**] and Gemariah [**dgem-uh-RYE-uh**] had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them. But the king commanded Jerahmeel [**dgih-RAH-mih-ell**] the son of Hammelech [**HAM-uh-leck**], and Seraiah [**sih-RYE-uh**] the son of Azriel [**AZ-rih-ell**], and Shelemiah [**shell-uh-MY-uh**] the son of Abdeel [**ABB-dih-ell**], to take Baruch [**BAY-rook**] the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

“Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch [**BAY-rook**] wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] the king of Judah hath burned. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] the king of Judah, Thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD of Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and

upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

“Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch [**BAY-rook**] the scribe, the son of Neriah [**neh-RYE-uh**]; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim [**dgeh-HOY-uh-kim**] king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the fourteenth Chapter of the Gospel According to St. John.⁴

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith [**SETH**] unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith [**SETH**] unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith [**SETH**] unto him, Lord, shew [**SHOW**] us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith [**SETH**] unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew [**SHOW**] us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do;

sult of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a definitive direction.’ ... We are speaking of an unprecedented and humanly inconceivable novelty: ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us’ (*Jn* 1:14a).”¹³

3. Our knowledge of Jesus’s words and works.

As to how we come to knowledge of Jesus through His words, Pope Benedict XVI has written about how “the unseen God ‘from the fullness of his love, addresses men and women as his friends, and lives among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company.’”¹⁴ In other words, Scripture, the reliable record of Jesus’s words, is God’s side of an ongoing dialogue with us.

However, very few of the world’s people will seek out the Scriptures from pure intellectual curiosity. Even if a few do so, those Scriptures will have little meaning to them when encountered in a vacuum. It is when people are the recipients of what Pope Paul VI called “the witness of life”¹⁵ that they become open to hearing what he termed “the word of life”.¹⁶

Conclusion:

At the risk of making a pun about the Gospel as “the Good News”, I must tell you this business of “the witness of life” is a classic “good news/bad news” situation. The “good news” is that all of us *can*, with God’s grace, give to the world that “witness of life”. But the capacity to do something is not the same thing as is actually performing it.

So the counterbalancing “bad news” is that, unless we so dedicate ourselves that our personal and Church lives *do* give that witness, the world will not see Jesus in us and so

sent among us on earth. That is the very reason that the Gospels were first written down: the original generation of Apostles and disciples spread the Church throughout the known world by word of mouth, based on their own personal testimonies. But as that original generation began to die off, it realized the necessity for preserving its personal witness to Christ's life and work and so that witness was written down and became the core of our New Testament.

The testimony of this New Testament *corpus* is that access to God is solely through Jesus¹⁰ and knowledge of Jesus comes solely through Jesus's *person*, the *words*, and the *works*.¹¹

2. Our knowledge of Jesus's person.

Since Jesus's Ascension, our knowledge of His person comes to us primarily through the Sacraments and through Scripture. Thus the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."¹²

To put this matter another way, God's ultimate revelation of Himself to us took place in the Incarnation of God the Son. As the great theologian, Pope *Emeritus* Benedict XVI, has put it:

"The eternal Word, expressed in creation and communicated in salvation history, in Christ became a man, 'born of a woman' (*Gal* 4:4). Here the word finds expression not primarily in discourse, concepts, or rules. Here we are set before the very person of Jesus. His unique and singular history is the definitive word which God speaks to humanity. We can see, then, why 'being Christian is not the re-

because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith [SETH] unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence."

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.”⁵ In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Introduction:

One of the great issues over which the Reformation was fought was the role that *works* play, or do not play, in our salvation. By the end of the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic beliefs in Purgatory, the Treasury of Merits, and Indulgences had become, at least in popular piety if not in official Church doctrine, the notion that if we perform the proper physical acts here on earth, that is, if we engage in “good works”, then those works may engage God’s favor and so “earn” us a better chance at salvation.

The Reformation actually began when a university professor of New Testament, outraged by the blatant sale of indulgences—in part to fund the building of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome—excoriated the practice and, in so doing, developed his own counter doctrine of salvation “solely by faith”. This became one of the great hallmarks of Evangelical⁶ and Reformed⁷ belief.

Theme:

Thus to us, living as we do after the life and work of that particular professor—who was named Martin Luther—the word “works” tends to make us shy away. This is because any reference to “works” automatically brings to mind

that dispute which seems so close to us but which actually arose a millennium and a half after the last of the New Testament books was written.

If we reflect for a moment on that fact of chronology, then we easily see that any references to “works” that we find within the New Testament itself can have no real relationship to those later theological squabbles.

Instead, when our Lord refers to “works”, He is indicating something else entirely. That something is not *our* acts that are intended to please God but Jesus’s *own* acts, which are intended to get our attention and elicit our understanding of Him. Our acts have no saving function whatever unless they are the product, the fruit, of our faith in Him but His⁸ have an evangelical⁹ and apologetic function toward us. His own teachings, acts, miracles, and other behaviors, and those of His immediate followers, are intended to convince non-Christians of the truth of the Christian religion and its claims.

Development:

For ere any individual person can become a Christian, he or she must be convinced of the truths that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that this Son came to earth to save mankind’s souls, and that following the Son is the only reliable path to God. Notice that I said “individual person”, because no one is born a Christian. Instead, every Christian is “re-born” as one, that is, must undergo the process of conversion and initiation for himself or herself, coming to know and to believe in Christ and then accepting that Christ as Savior.

1. Our knowledge of God.

In this process, the Gospel accounts are critical witnesses to Who Jesus is and to what He did while He was pre-