

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

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

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the twelfth Chapter of the First Book of Samuel.<sup>3</sup>

“And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man’s hand. And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

“And Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera [**SISS-urr-uh**], captain of the host of Hazor [**HAY-zoar**], and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim [**BAY-uh-limb**] and Ashtaroth [**ASH-tuh-rahth**]: but now deliver us out of the hand of our

enemies, and we will serve thee. And the LORD sent Jerubbaal [**dgerr-uh-BAY-ull**], and Bedan [**BEE-dann**], and Jephthah [**JEFF-thuh**], and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe. And when ye saw that Nahash [**NAY-hash**] the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king. Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you. If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God: But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.

“Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king. So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.

“And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people. Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him

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and perfect.”<sup>9</sup> And as we do so, we should also bear in mind the words of St. John:

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever.”<sup>10</sup>

And now, unto God ✠ the Father, God ✠ the Son, and God ✠ the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all might, majesty, dominion, power, and glory, both now and evermore. Amen.

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January 9, 2011

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<sup>1</sup> This was originally written as a sermon for Mass on the First Sunday after the Epiphany, 2011.

<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 39 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxiii (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxi (CIPBC 1963).

<sup>3</sup> I Samuel 12:1-end (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> Job 39:1-end (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> Romans 12:1-end (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> Romans 12:2 (RSV).

<sup>7</sup> HERBERT G. MAY AND BRUCE M. METZGER, EDs., THE NEW OXFORD ANNOTATED BIBLE WITH THE APOCRYPHA REVISED STANDARD VERSION 1374 fn (Oxford University Press 1977).

<sup>8</sup> This is one of the very few instances before the 18<sup>th</sup> Century where a coat of arms actually alludes to some heroic feat.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 12:2 (RSV).

<sup>10</sup> 1 St. John 2:15-17 (RSV).

in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.”

*Or,*

Here beginneth the thirty-ninth Chapter of the Book of Job.<sup>4</sup>

“Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them. Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn? Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust, And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not her’s: her labour is in vain without fear; Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding. What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider. Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?

the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith [SETH] among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting. Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the twelfth Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Romans.<sup>5</sup>

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he

turned to Christian Europe. Apparently he had had his fill of the Infidels, however, for he did not return to the Austrian army. That is why he was unemployed in England and so available for hire by the would-be Virginians.

Austria’s lengthy conflicts with the Turks, in which Smith distinguished himself, seem to us like the stuff of Medieval, or at most Renaissance, legends. We tend to forget these wars only reached their crest 76 years *after* the landing at Jamestown, when the second Ottoman siege of Vienna was broken in 1683. And these conflicts actually continued in one form or another right up until 1918, at the close of the First World War. So there could hardly have been a more “Old World” career than the one Smith initially embarked on, as a mercenary soldier fighting for Christian Europe against the invading Muslim Turks.

Yet this is the man whose next adventure was, geographically, thousands of miles away from Old Europe as a leader of the English colonists in Virginia, in another hemisphere, and, culturally and historically, was not only in an utterly different environment but effectively in a different era.

### **Conclusion:**

However, great as the personal, cultural, military, and political adjustments were which *Smith* had to make, as he transferred his sphere of professional activity from Europe to the American coast, those changes were minute compared to the ones *we* will experience as we make the transition from *this* world to the *next* one.

In anticipation of those changes in our fundamental condition, we should be ever mindful of St. Paul’s words to the Romans: “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable

fifty years ago. Now “Captain” is a military title but, in the five decades since I first heard his name, I have never heard anyone ask how it came about that he was a Captain or what it was of which he was a Captain. However, the answers to those unasked questions are very instructive as showing how very far into the soil of the Old World the Jamestown settlers were really rooted.

For John Smith became a Captain in the Sixteenth Century, in Continental Europe, fighting in the armies of the Holy Roman Emperor, in Austria’s age-long wars against the Ottoman Turks. In particular, in Smith’s younger years he fought in Hungary, where he was promoted, and also in Wallachia [**woll-AY-shee-uh**] and Transylvania. Eventually he was knighted for his services by Sigismund Bathory [**BATT-or-ee**], the Prince of Transylvania, and given a coat of arms bearing the heads of three Turks whom Smith had supposedly slain in single combat.<sup>8</sup>

Bathory’s [**BATT-or-ee**] action would have passed unremarked in the international culture of the Middle Ages—which still in many respects persisted in the Balkans of that day—but modern nationalism had already begun to infiltrate a growing England. So Queen Elizabeth was outraged that Bathory [**BATT-or-ee**] had conferred these honors on one of her subjects without first asking her permission, remarking that she would not have any others branding her sheep. To this day, British subjects cannot accept titles and decorations from foreign monarchs without first obtaining leave from the British Crown, a limitation for which they can thank Captain Smith.

Ironically, for a founder of the Virginia that would become the very model of a state built upon slave-holding, Smith himself was finally captured in battle by the Turks. In those days long before any Geneva Conventions, they promptly sold him into slavery. After some time, he escaped from captivity and, through various romantic adventures, re-

that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that she-weth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith [**SETH**] the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

**Text:**

From the Second Lesson: “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”<sup>6</sup> In the Name of the ✠ Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the ✠ Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

**Introduction, Theme, and Development:**

In the passage I have just given you as a text for this sermon, St. Paul tells the people of the church congregation in Rome that Christians are to live as though they belong to

the age that is coming, not to the age through which we are presently living.<sup>7</sup> This is what theologians call the “eschatological [**ess-kah-toe-LODGE-ikal**] view” of existence, for “eschatology” [**ess-kah-TAL-uh-gee**] is the study of what in Greek is “the *eskaton*” [**ess-kah-TAHN**] or the final events in the history of the world and of humankind.

In other words, Christians are properly people who live always in *expectation*, looking forward to Christ’s Second Coming and the end of this age. Thus we are, in a very real way, people who live between two worlds, this one and the next, having one foot firmly planted here where we were born and one reaching for where we were reborn in Christ to be.

We are like prospective immigrants, who have been selected to travel to a new country that has been opened up to settlement but who are preparing for the journey on which we have not yet set out.

As with all such immigrants, we are people of the land and culture in which we were raised and which we are planning to leave behind us. We know we will be much changed by our experiences on our travels to our new home and by our experiences there once we come into it, but although we know there will be changes, we cannot now really understand how sweeping those changes will be.

As a necessarily inadequate example of this process, let me direct your attention to some events to which we were all introduced in the course of our schooling—at least, those of us who were schooled in the United States were. Remember how the first settlers at Jamestown in Virginia were people of the Old World, who came to the New one expecting to replicate the patterns of life and of agriculture that they had known in England. Trying to prepare for their new home as well as they could do when they knew virtually nothing about the place to which they were traveling, they

made careful measures to protect themselves from the indigenous inhabitants here.

So they sailed for the New World well outfitted with pikes, matchlock muskets, iron helmets, and metal breastplates and back plates, in fact with all the quasi-Medieval panoply of Elizabethan/Jacobean infantry. If you wish to see what this equipment looked like in use, you can get a pretty good idea by looking at pictures of the Swiss Guard at today’s Vatican, only the Virginians would not have been quite so colourful as the Swiss Guards are. Then you can just imagine what it would have meant to hump all that scrap metal through the hot, damp, and trackless wilderness of early 16<sup>th</sup> Century Virginia.

In England, it would take another ninety years before these items were recognized as utterly obsolete but just as soon as the settlers landed they learned how inefficient and ill adapted to the vast American forests this gear was. So while the iconography of our history books invariably shows Spanish *conquistadores* in Central and South America shining in steel morions and cuirasses, they never show the English colonists in North America in the same hot, heavy equipment, even though they had carefully packed it along with them.

Not only did the Jamestown settlers bring along the cutting edge of Jacobean military technology but they also felt they needed a technologist, *i.e.*, the guidance of an expert in that equipment’s use. So they hired as one of their leaders a professional soldier, Captain John Smith, the man who is principally remembered today for the way he was saved by an adolescent Indian girl, Pocahontas [**poke-ah-HAHN-tuss**], from death at the wrathful hands of her father, Chief Powhatan [**pow-HAT-un**].

You, like I, probably first heard of Captain John Smith in elementary school, which for me was more than