

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER
Good Friday¹

The Rev. Warren E. Shaw, Priest-in-Charge

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the thirteenth Verse of the fifty-second Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.³

“Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he

made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the eleventh Verse of the second Chapter of First Epistle General of St. Peter.⁴

“... 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, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be

whom you represent. Let God be glorified in everything you do.

—oo0oo—

St. David’s Anglican Catholic Church
Charlottesville, Virginia

April 29, 2012

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Epistle for Mass on the Third Sunday after Easter, 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 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 Isaiah 52:13—53:end (KJV).

⁴ I Peter 2:11-end (KJV).

⁵ I Peter 2:11a (KJV).

comes the end when [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.” It is not our job to do that; it is His.

But let us not dwell on what we are not supposed to do. Let us look at what we are supposed to do in the midst of the alien culture in which we find ourselves. The Epistle concludes with a summary of what that is: “Honor all men.” “Love the brotherhood.” “Fear God.” “Honor the king.”

We are to respect not just the wealthy and the refined and the well-educated and the highly-placed, but the poor and the slow and the foolish and those who are bored with the menial jobs that they are stuck with. Honor them all. Acknowledge their presence. Address them by their names. Say “Please” and “thank you”. Wait for them to finish what they are doing or saying before you call for their attention. “Honor all men.”

Go beyond respect for those who share your faith. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to make sacrifices for each other, serve each other, rejoice together and cry together, value each other’s company, be ready if necessary to die for each other. “Love the brotherhood.”

“Fear God.” You cannot imagine the awesome power and glory He possesses. You should tremble in His presence. He is not your buddy. He is your Lord and master. He is your Judge.

“Honor the king.” You don’t have to like Him. You don’t have to agree with him. You do have to respect Him and obey His laws in so far as they are compatible with your faith.

We are strangers and pilgrims in this world. We belong to a Kingdom and a culture that is different from what we are surrounded by in this world. Do not get caught up in that alien culture. Remember who you are and to whom you belong and

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.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Epistle: “Dearly beloved I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims...”⁵ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

The opening phrase of today’s Epistle indicates the status that we have as long as we live in this world. “Our community is in heaven,” as St. Paul says in Philippians. That’s where our true home is. That’s where our citizenship is. That’s where we belong, and that’s where we are ultimately headed. We are here in this world temporarily as resident aliens, and St Peter is telling us how to behave as such.

Many of you have lived in foreign countries, and you know how to conduct yourselves in that environment. What St. Peter is saying is that all of us are in that situation and we need to conduct ourselves accordingly.

The first thing he says is that we are not to behave like the Secret Service agents that went to Columbia to prepare for

President Obama's visit. Let your conduct be honorable. People may speak against you as evildoers, but when they see the good works that you do, they will glorify God.

Everything we do in this world should glorify God. He is our king. It is to him that we owe our ultimate allegiance, and everything we do as his subjects and servants reflects on him, just as what American citizens do abroad reflects either good or ill on our country and on all Americans. Like it or not, you are the incarnation of the Christian faith wherever you go in this alien culture.

There is an old saying that you are the only Bible some people will read. In the workplace, in the classroom, on the ball field, in the post office or the grocery store, when people see you and observe how you conduct yourself, they form opinions, not only of you but of all of us as well. They may be drawn to consider coming to church in order to be like you, or they may decide they want nothing to do with the church if you are any example of it what stands for. That's an awesome responsibility, but that's the way it is, folks.

St. Peter says, "I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." (That's the Revised Standard translation.)

The Apostle then goes on to talk about political activity, in which he cautions us not get involved. You don't do that in a foreign country.

As long as we live in America, we have the right and the privilege, some would say the duty, to vote for the people we want to be our leaders. But that is a modern concept, totally alien to the thinking of the Apostles or anyone else in the ancient world. The only way they knew of to overthrow a

government was to take up arms against it, and, like Jesus, they counseled against doing that.

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme; or to governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of them that do well," says St. Peter.

St. Paul likewise says in Romans, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God." Jesus himself said, "Render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, and unto God the things that belong to God." He said to Pilate, "You would have no power over me except it had been given you from above."

St Paul goes on to say, "Rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad." That was basically true of Roman rule. But we have to be a little careful here, because there have been times when civil authorities have ordered Christians to do things that their religion will not allow them to do. In such cases disobedience is not only justified but necessary. Such resistance, however, does not justify armed rebellion. It involves the acceptance of martyrdom.

That may be a little hard for us as children and heirs of The American Revolution to accept. But that revolution was born of Enlightenment thinking; not of Biblical thinking. Enlightenment thinking does not recognize that we are merely strangers and pilgrims in this world, and that this world is ultimately doomed.

The Book of Revelation says, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ." But the nations and their governments are not going to be reformed and will not evolve into a heaven on earth. They will in fact be destroyed and replaced by the action of God. It is He who allows them to exist and it is He who will destroy them on the day of judgment. As St. Paul says In I Corinthians, "Then