

**SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER  
The Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity<sup>1</sup>**

**The Rev. Warren E. Shaw, Rector**

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

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the seventeenth Verse of the thirty-fourth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel.<sup>3</sup>

“... And as for you, O my flock, thus saith [SETH] the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of

the hand of those that served themselves of them. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith [SETH] the Lord GOD. And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith [SETH] the Lord GOD."

*Or,*

Here beginneth the fifteenth Verse of the thirty-seventh Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel.<sup>4</sup>

"The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

"And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew [SHOW] us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith [SETH] the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim [**EE-frih-eem**], and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

"And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith [SETH] the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two king-

came in water and in blood, so He can enable us to do the same when He comes to us again in the Sacraments that we receive.

There are three that bear witness: the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three agree. If you believe their witness, you may be assured of the presence of Christ in your life and you may rest in the assurance that His power will protect you in the midst of whatever the world and the devil may throw at you.

"This is the victory that overcomes the world," says the writer, "even our faith."

You have that assurance because a Sacrament is not only the means by which Christ comes to us but is also the pledge of the gifts that He brings to us when we receive them. And that leads me back to the definition of a Sacrament: "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us; ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive this grace, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

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St. David's Anglican Catholic Church  
Charlottesville, Virginia

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Epistle for Holy Communion on the First Sunday after Easter, 2013.

<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 44* (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxix (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxvii (CIPBC 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 34:17-end (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 37:15-end (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> I John 5:1-end (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> St. John 1:15 (RSV).

<sup>7</sup> St. Mark 1:9-11 (RSV).

the Baptism, the Crucifixion and the Pentecost experience. But there are always deeper meanings in the writings of St. John, let us go deeper. Let us go to the sacramental level to see how this passage relates to us today.

First let me remind you how the Prayer Book defines a Sacrament. In the Second Office of Instruction,<sup>8</sup> Sacrament is defined as “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us; ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive this grace, and a pledge to assure us thereof.”

What happens in a Sacrament is that a spiritual reality presents itself to our senses through some temporal or physical reality. In Baptism that physical reality is water. It is through water that Christ enters our lives and begins His work of re-creating us.

But that is only the beginning. The Sacrament of Confirmation is generally thought of, at least in the West, as the completion of Baptism. In that Sacrament, the Holy Spirit comes through the laying on of the bishop’s hands in response to a confession of faith, to confirm the conviction that Jesus is indeed the Son of God and the Savior of the world. After we are confirmed, Jesus comes to us in and through the bread and wine that represent His broken Body and His poured out Blood.

It is the spiritual reality in a Sacrament that is in control, and to get the benefit of the Sacrament, we must respond to it on the spiritual level. It’s not enough just to get wet, and it’s not enough just to swallow the bread and the wine. Something else is required, and that something else is faith. Faith that Jesus does in fact come to us in the Sacraments we receive; faith that he is able to release us from the bondage of sin and to make us into people fit to live in His kingdom; faith in His promise to bring us before the throne of His Father and present us holy and blameless; faith that as He overcame the woes inflicted on Him by the world and emerged victorious even over death when He

doms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the fifth Chapter of the First Epistle General of John.<sup>5</sup>

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcommeth the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost:

and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

### **Homily:**

Today we are going to look at what St. John says in the Second Lesson for this evening, and we're going to look at it on two levels. The first is what I will call the historical level, and the second I will call the sacramental level.

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John says that Jesus came by water and by blood, and that the Holy Spirit is witness to His identity as the Son of God. We begin on the historical level with the scene of Jesus' baptism, a scene that St. John the Evangelist reports as a brief "flashback" by John the Baptist: "John bore witness to him, and cried, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me."'"<sup>6</sup>

That, of course, is a reference to what occurred at Jesus' Baptism by the John the Baptizer. However, despite this reference in his Epistle, St. John does not describe that Baptism itself in his Fourth Gospel, although it is related in each of the other three Gospels. Here is St. Mark's version:

"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased.'"<sup>7</sup>

The baptism of Jesus marked His public debut, His coming out if you will, and the beginning of his earthly ministry. But that ministry, with all the teaching, and all the healing, was not complete until it was ended by the shedding of His Blood on the Cross.

So Jesus came by water, but not by water only; with water and blood. The Holy Spirit bore witness, not only at His Baptism but on the Day of Pentecost as well when He inspired St. Peter to proclaim to the masses, "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

So when John says, "There are three witnesses: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree," we can understand what he means on the historical level by recalling

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