

haven't met my brother, because if you had, you would be changed. You cannot meet Jesus Christ and not be changed. Knowing about Christ is not the same as knowing Christ; if we truly know Christ, then we would be changed and live like Christ. And when we begin living like Christ, and proclaim the Gospel in both word AND deed, then the foolishness of ignorant men will be silenced. The world will then lament again, because we will then become the light of God's righteousness, bearing our cross and following Him.

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Propers for Mass on the Third Sunday after Easter, 2012.

<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 38 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxi (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxix (CIPBC 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 30:1-end (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 34:1-end (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 65:17-end (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> St. John 16:5-end (KJV).

<sup>7</sup> I Peter 2:11 (KJV).

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## SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER The Sunday after Ascension Day<sup>1</sup>

### Lessons:<sup>2</sup>

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the thirtieth Chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy.<sup>3</sup>

“And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers: If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

“For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

*Or,*

Here beginneth the thirty-fourth Chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy.<sup>4</sup>

“And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo [**KNEE-bow**], to the top of Pisgah [**PIZZ-gah**], that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed [**SHOWD**] him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, And all Naph-tali [**NAFF-tuh-lye**], and the land of Ephraim [**EE-frih-em**], and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea,

one we talk about, but not someone we follow. The whole Church today is playing a game that I like to call Monopoly Christianity. A bunch of worldly people are gathered around the table, playing for the “get out of jail free card.” The Gospel is not important, because it has not changed their lives. Peter is saying that because we do not look like the one who owns us, we cannot silence the ignorance of foolish men. And that is the greatest single cause of atheism. We acknowledge Christ with our lips, and walk out the Church door, denying Him by the way we live.

We tell people we are saved but the fruit of our lives does not bear the mark of our being saved. We aren’t saved because we go to Church, we go to Church because we were saved. And we are diminishing the light of the Gospel, because the ignorance of foolish men sees our ignorance, and it is not silenced. We are telling the world that we are orange trees, but either bore bad fruit, or no fruit at all. When the husbandman sends the vinedresser to harvest the fruit that He has watered and cultivated, by Word and Sacrament, and finds that there is no fruit to harvest, Scripture says that He will cut us down and throw us into the fire. We cannot say that we are an orange tree and not bear oranges. Why? Because the fruit of our lives feeds the world which is hungry for truth of God’s righteousness and is the mark of true salvation.

The Epistle of James, Chapter 2, says in effect, “You show me your faith without works, and I’ll show you mine by my works.” The Jewish Christians, over whom James was bishop and to whom he was writing, were only comfortable with knowing about God. They were the children of the Old Covenant, and they prided themselves in knowing more about God than all the other believers of their day who were Gentiles, or those not of Jewish descent.

James says here that knowing about God was not enough, that the Church needed to bear the fruit IN knowing God. In other words, James was saying, obviously you really

ion with God, subject to His will, to save us from ourselves, because we are only finite, and our finite thinking and living will only bring us destruction in the end. As our Collect mentions this morning, we are, as the Church, to show them that they are in error, and bring them into the light of thy truth.

The Collect for Easter 3 says, **“Grant unto all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s Religion, that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession.”** St. Peter says in the Epistle for that same Sunday, **“I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul...”**<sup>7</sup> For those who have been called by grace, we do not belong to the secular world, but we are strangers and pilgrims. We belong to the heavenlies through our regeneration. And our lives should reflect just that.

Why? We don’t just preach the Gospel with our lips, but by who we are as individual sheep, pilgrims, and strangers. In other words, don’t look like the world, because we are not of the world. We shine the light of God’s righteousness by being different. We shouldn’t look like the world, act like the world, talk like the world, do the same things that the world does, because that diminishes the witness of the Gospel. If we are no different being inside the Church, than those who are outside the Church, then what’s the use preaching the Gospel? It hasn’t changed us, so why even proclaim it. Christ didn’t die for sin for us to remain in it.

We have bought into the lie that God loves me just the way I am. And I have to say this, NO HE DOES NOT. He does not love me just the way that I am, He loves me enough to die for me, to call me out, and change me into what He created me to be. To say otherwise says that God’s love is promiscuous, and that His death was in vain. And because we have bought into this lie, the world is beginning to rejoice again.

The Church has been lax in beaming the light of God’s righteousness through the Gospel, because Jesus is only some-

And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar [**ZOE-urr**]. And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

“So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor [**beth-PEA-are**]: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

“And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

“And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

“And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

“And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh [**FAY-row**], and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed [**SHOWD**] in the sight of all Israel.”

*Or,*

Here beginneth the seventeenth Verse of the sixty-fifth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.<sup>5</sup>

“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old

man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith [SETH] the LORD."

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the fifth Verse of the sixteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.<sup>6</sup>

"... But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew [SHOW] you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [SHOW] it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of

establishes here is His Church, the covenant people of God under the New Law of Grace.

Why does the world lament the presence of God's righteous light present within the Sacred Society of the Church here on earth? Because it is a continuous call to repentance, or at least it should be. It is a call for them to turn away from their ungodliness, to receive the light of God's truth in the Gospel. Those who sin remain comfortable in their sin, because they are enslaved to it. The fallen nature of the reprobate loathes anything that says they are wrong. In their fallen state, they believe themselves to be as absolute as God, which was the lie that the serpent used to key in on Adam and Eve in the garden.

That is why individual relativism is the biggest obstacle for people to overcome in hearing the Gospel. The sinner says, "I am absolute in my own thinking, and there is absolutely no absolute Truth, except for what I believe to be absolutely true. My individual opinions about everything are what guide me through life. And because everyone is autonomous, or self-governed, the current thought is that you have your truth, I have mine, and we shouldn't impose on each other the truth that we hold. Because in the long run, it's all gonna be OK." Individual Relativism and the Universalist mindset are the two enemies of the Gospel. Why? Because the Gospel is absolute, not relative, and God deals with individuals, not with a collective humanity.

Within the Gospel the world hears that there is only one Sovereign Will, and my individual will is not it. The world hears that there is one Absolute Truth, whether I believe there to be or not. And the light of the Gospel diminishes this sense of I'm OK, You're OK. If we are not Subject to the Will and the example of the Good Shepherd, then we are not OK; we are sheep on our way to the slaughter house of eternal fire and damnation.

As the Church, we are to preach the Gospel that Jesus Christ came and paid for our sins to bring us into complete un-

**deny the trinity you lose your soul, if your try to explain the trinity you shall lose your mind.”** So, let us move on.

Jesus was sharing that He had to leave, but afterwards, His Church would be born. After His Resurrection, He would spend forty days walking with the Apostles. And they would be rejoicing because the Saviour and King had fulfilled all that He had promised, while the world lamented the fact that He was still present amongst them even after their trying to put Him to death.

After his Ascension, the world would then rejoice because the presence of righteousness had ascended, and they could continue in their darkness because the light, who was Christ, could no longer cast a beam of His righteousness into the darkness of their hearts. The disciples would lament because the source of their life and strength, the light in their darkness, would no longer be present among them.

And then would come the day of Pentecost, when the fire of God’s righteous light would return in the presence of the Holy Ghost, and would set the world ablaze again through the life of the Church, and the preaching of the Gospel. The disciples would then rejoice, again, knowing the Divine life that walked amongst them now lived and resided within them, as they became living tabernacles of God’s divine life. The world would then lament because the light of God’s righteousness would then cast a beam into the darkness of their hearts again, and they could no longer remain comfortable in sin without being conscience of His righteousness.

In today’s Second Lesson, Jesus explains that the small amount of time that the Apostles would wait before the sending forth of the Holy Ghost is like that of a woman in labor. She suffers the pain and anguish of giving birth, but once the child is born, that anguish turns into joy, because she finally beholds the fruit of her anguish and waiting. So the provision that Jesus

mine, and shall shew [SHOW] it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith [SETH], A little while? we cannot tell what he saith [SETH]. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew [SHOW] you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye

might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

**Homily:**

**Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.**

Through the season of Eastertide, the Mass lections continue to carry a sense of the majesty of the provision God established for us after Our Lord’s Death and Resurrection. For example, on Easter 2, in the Good Shepherd discourse, Jesus explains the means and doctrines of Grace, where He lays down His life for His sheep. By purchasing us with His own shed blood, He then pursues us, calls us out by name, brings us into this life of Grace, and grants us perseverance until the end.

A Sundays prior to that, on Easter 1, Our Lord gives us the tool, a chisel as it were, and a provision to constantly conform us to His image, by chiseling off all those fleshly lusts and desires in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Now this Sacrament is not used to merit God’s forgiveness, because once again, grace is not earned by any work, but is a provision set in place for those who already walk in the forgiveness of God’s grace and mercy, to purge us from all of those things that war against the regenerate believer’s soul.

All of the necessary prerequisite works that were required to obtain God’s forgiveness under the Old Law were completed in the Death of Christ, so all we do is respond to the voice of the One who paid our debt in full, the one who purchased us and won for us eternal life through His work, and live for and serve our new Master in the provisions He has set forth under the New Law.

The Gospel for Easter 3, which is also our Second Lesson today, continues with the promises and provisions set in place for us by His death. Jesus said, “**A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.**” Of course without the required foreknowledge of what was about to take place and transpire, His disciples did not fully understand what He was saying. All of His work, being an example for them, and for us to follow, led Him to this particular place where He was telling them He was going to leave this world, but would not leave them alone.

When He told the disciples that they would not see Him, He was telling them He was going to Ascend to the Father to take His rightful place again at the Father’s right hand. But they would also see Him again very soon, which is a foretelling of the coming of the Holy Spirit. He was actually talking about the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit of Fire would consume the hearts of those He purchased, and they would begin establishing His Kingdom here on earth through the proclamation of the Gospel and baptism.

Now, do not misunderstand me; I am not trying to feed to you the idea of modalism, which says that Yes, God is one, but He manifested Himself as three different personalities, or modes, at different times in the course of salvation history. This idea was, of course, condemned as heresy by the Church Fathers. Instead, Jesus was here uniquely explaining the unity or oneness which is shared within the Triune God Head. God is Father, God is Son, and God is Holy Spirit. But the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit, and neither is the Son or Spirit the Father. All three persons are uncreated, eternally present, and are differentiated, yet They are One.

Jesus says, I only do what my Father tells me too, and My Father will send to you the Holy Spirit. So here we see the division among the Godhead, yet, we also see the unity. And I also love St. Augustine’s explanation of the Trinity, “**If you**