

You cannot meet Jesus Christ and not be changed. Knowing about Christ is not the same as knowing Chris; 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 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 xxxviii (CIPBC 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 18:1-4, 19-end (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 33:1-20 (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> St. John 16:1-end (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> I Peter 2:11 (KJV).

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## SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER The Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity<sup>1</sup>

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

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the eighteenth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel.<sup>3</sup>

“The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

“... ”

“Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith [SETH] the LORD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?

“But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

“Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet saith [SETH] the house of Israel, The way of the LORD is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith [SETH] the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

“Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith [SETH] the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”

*Or,*

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

“Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and

The whole Church today is playing a game, in what 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. And 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 was saying here that knowing about God was not enough, that they needed to bear the fruit IN knowing God. In other words, James was saying, obviously you really haven't met my brother, because if you had, you would be changed.

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>6</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 someone we talk about, but not someone we follow.

take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.

“So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live, saith [SETH] the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

“Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his

wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.

“Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the sixteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to John.<sup>5</sup>

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. 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 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,

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, as we mentioned last week, 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 the biggest obstacle for people to overcome in hearing the Gospel is individual relativism. 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.

And as the Church, we are to preach the Gospel that Jesus Christ came and paid for our sins to bring us into complete union with God, subject to His will, to save us from ourselves, because we are only finite, and our finite thinking and living

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

What is this that he saith **[SETH]** 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 week 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 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.

And Easter 3 continues that pattern with the promises and provisions set in place for us by His death. In the Gospel for that day, which is also our Second Lesson today, 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 deny the trinity you lose your soul, if you try to explain the trinity you shall lose your mind.”** So, let us move on.