

## SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER

Rogation Wednesday<sup>1</sup>

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

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the twenty-ninth Verse of the Song of the Three Children.<sup>3</sup>

“... Blessed art thou, O Lord God of our fathers: and to be praised and exalted above all for ever. And blessed is thy glorious and holy name: and to be praised and exalted above all for ever. Blessed art thou in the temple of thine holy glory: and to be praised and glorified above all for ever. Blessed art thou that beholdest the depths, and sittest upon the cherubims: and to be praised and exalted above all for ever. Blessed art thou on the glorious throne of thy kingdom: and to be praised and glorified above all for ever. Blessed art thou in the firmament of heaven: and above ail to be praised and glorified for ever. O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever, O ye heavens, bless ye the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the thirty-sixth Verse of the twenty-fourth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke.<sup>4</sup>

“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith [**SETH**] unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed [**SHOWD**] them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words

which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

**Text:**

From the Second Lesson: “*Jesus said, Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*”<sup>5</sup> In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Homily:**

In today’s Second Lesson, we hear the warning of Jesus to the Apostles that they should wait in Jerusalem until they are visited by the Holy Ghost and are “*endued with power*” to take on their mission of carrying the Gospel to the whole world.

This “*enduing with power*” was the Baptism with the Holy Spirit that Jesus talked about: “*For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*”<sup>6</sup>

---

<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 37 (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> *Song of 3 Children 29-37 (KJV)*.

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke 24:36-end (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> St. Luke 24:49 (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> Acts 1:5 (KJV).

<sup>7</sup> Acts 1:8 (KJV).

<sup>8</sup> Acts 1:11 (KJV).

<sup>9</sup> St. Luke 24:49 (KJV).

<sup>10</sup> St. Luke 24:52-53 (KJV).

<sup>11</sup> St. John 16:33 (KJV).

<sup>12</sup> St. John 14:2 (KJV).

<sup>13</sup> St. Luke 24:50-51 (KJV).

<sup>14</sup> Supply Priest, Holy Angels Anglican Church, Picayune, MS, and Christ Anglican Catholic Pro-Cathedral Church, Metairie, LA.

John the Baptist had baptized many in the waters of the River Jordan, but as our Lord had earlier explained, John baptized only with water, and not with the Holy Spirit, as he was not empowered to do so. And the reason that John could not baptize with the Holy Spirit was that, during the time of his ministry, the Holy Spirit had not yet descended on the Church. That occurred on the day of Pentecost, and ever since then, you and I, unlike John the Baptist, *are* empowered to baptize with the Holy Spirit, because when *we* baptize, we do so on behalf of the Church in which that Holy Spirit dwells.

This was also true of the Apostles after their experience on Pentecost. With the greater Baptism of the Holy Spirit, however, the Apostles would be given the power of the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel, to preach the Word of God and to carry that Word to the entire world.

*“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”<sup>7</sup>*

This was a job that would require such strength, faith and courage that it could not be attempted successfully without the indwelling power of God. The Apostles would face great personal tribulations and trials as they began to spread the Word. Some would be imprisoned, some put in prison and some killed by stoning, by crucifixion or in other ways.

But despite the perils which faced them, and the great personal risks they took to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, the Apostles always had the promise of the Angels ringing in their ears: *“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”<sup>8</sup>*

This was a ringing reminder that the mission of Jesus was not finished, but was being handed to them to complete. Jesus had planted His Church. He had selected the first leaders of that Church, and had taught them.

Now it was up to them to carry what they had been taught to the rest of the world, as Jesus, having completed His work of defeating sin and evil and creating the pathway for mankind to return to God, now returned to Heaven to assume His place there.

All that remained before the Apostles could begin their work was for the Holy Spirit to endue them with the power of the Spirit. In the meantime, Jesus commanded them, *“tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”*<sup>9</sup>

This they did, we are told, as *“they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.”*<sup>10</sup> Despite the horrors of the Passion and Crucifixion, despite their fears and worries about the future, despite the fact that they knew they would soon face a hostile world, the Apostles found a reason for joy.

The reason for *their* joy was in what they had witnessed. Jesus had overcome death and the grave. He had, as He assured them in last week’s Gospel, *“overcome the world,”*<sup>11</sup> giving them every reason to be of good cheer.

Jesus made it clear to them that He had done all that was done in order to save the world. As He had promised them, *“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”*<sup>12</sup>

We share in that same promise. We, too, have every reason to *“be of good cheer.”* We share in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and we share in the mission that devolves from that Baptism.

We need not tarry, we need not delay. All we need do is to do what our Lord has commanded us to do – to share the Good News of the Gospel and take part in spreading that Good News throughout the world, to all people everywhere.

When we do so, we may rest assured that we are following the charge our Lord gave to us. Even when the task seems too much for us, we can rest assured that the Grace and power of the Holy Spirit will be with us and flow through us to enable us to carry on.

It is worth remembering that the last thing that Jesus said to His Apostles before being raised up to Glory was to bless them: *“And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”*<sup>13</sup>

No less does He bless us when we do His will.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, give us the courage and the grace to follow in the footsteps of Your Apostles who you sent first to Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the Holy Ghost, then to the furthestmost parts of the world to spread your Gospel. Let us, like them, face whatever adversity there may be in good cheer and with faith, and in Your time, bring us with all Your Saints into the joy of Your Eternal Kingdom. This we pray through Your immeasurable mercy. Amen.

—oo0oo—

The Rev. Larry Wagoner, MSW<sup>14</sup>  
May 12, 2013

---

<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Ascension Day, 2013.