

**SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER**  
**The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity<sup>1</sup>**

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

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

“And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith [SETH] the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

“Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib [*tell-AY-bibb*], that dwelt by the river of Chebar [*KEY-barr*], and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days. And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have

made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.”

*Or,*

Here beginneth the thirteenth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel.<sup>4</sup>

“And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith **[SETH]** the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith **[SETH]**: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith **[SETH]** it; albeit I have not spoken? Therefore thus saith **[SETH]** the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and

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seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith [SETH] the Lord GOD. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

“Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Therefore thus saith [SETH] the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith [SETH] the Lord GOD.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

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

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the

branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both

The end results of our right choices are everlasting life and salvation.

Remember, He chose us first and He doesn't make mistakes.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, You have chosen us to be your followers in this world. We are in the world, but not of the world. In this time we face hatred and evil because we chose to stay with You. Keep us always strong to remain so dedicated to Your will and Your way that we may never be shaken, deceived or deterred from following You. As we were saved by Your precious death and Resurrection, let us not now waste the gift You have given us. This we ask in Your Holy Name. *Amen.*

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The Rev. Mr. Larry Wagoner, MSW<sup>12</sup>  
October 28, 2012

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion on the Feast of SS. Simon and Jude, 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 43 (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 3:4-21 (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 13:1-16 (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> St. John 15:1-end (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> St. John 15:17-19 (RSV).

<sup>7</sup> St. Matthew 22:36-40 (RSV).

<sup>8</sup> St. John 15:18-19 (RSV).

<sup>9</sup> St. John 15:21 (RSV).

<sup>10</sup> St. John 15:22-24 (RSV).

<sup>11</sup> St. John 15:26-27 (RSV).

As our Lord proclaims, if we followed the ways of the world, then the world would love us. If we shared in evil, then the evil-doers would rejoice in our falling as well.

But if we refuse to be drawn away from God, if we remain steadfast in our love of God and His laws, then the world, which faces certain calamity, must hate us. The world faces this calamity because so many do not know God and follow Him: *“But all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me”*,<sup>9</sup> says Jesus.

It is not that they have not had the opportunity to know God. Jesus dispels that claim to innocence, pointing out that He has come to show them the truth.

*“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.”*<sup>10</sup>

Sometimes we have to choose. Choices have consequences. One of the consequences of our choice to follow God is that we may face discrimination, disrespect, misunderstanding, opposition and even hatred while we are here on earth. But our Lord will not leave us to face those things alone.

He gives us His reassurance, *“But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning.”*<sup>11</sup>

Sometimes we have to choose. Then it is critical that we make the right choice, that we choose to remain faithful to God and His law and to continue to be His servants in the world.

me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

### **Text:**

From the Second Lesson: *“These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”*<sup>6</sup> In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### **Homily:**

Sometimes you have to choose. Throughout time, this truth has been the subject of songs, of writings and of moralizing.

We must choose our friends. It is to be hoped we choose well, because our choices say a lot about us. Those with whom we surround ourselves will influence us greatly, and will in great part determine how others see us. It is often said “by their friends you shall know them”, or, more colloquially, “birds of a feather flock together”, and there is great truth to that. After all, we tend to be most comfortable with, and spend most of our time around, those with whom we feel similarities in life.

If we chose poorly, and surround ourselves with people who participate in evil, who sin voluntarily, and who disregard others, then it is sadly likely that we ourselves will do those very same things. On the other hand, if we spend much of our

time with others who value a principled life, who respect other people, who try to live according to the laws of God, then we are likely to emulate them and to live the same way they do.

We must choose a job. Our life's occupation, too, will say much about us. Whether we are good at our chosen task, whether we are dedicated to our work and take care to do that work well speaks a world about us, either positively or negatively.

If we are on time to work, and learn our tasks well, performing them to the very best of our abilities and to the end of furthering the goals of our employer, then we are likely to do well and enjoy our work. If, on the other hand, our work is slipshod and careless, if we hate our work, and if we try to find any possible excuse not to go to work, then we are likely to be seen as a marginal worker at best and to have problems in our work life.

Similarly, we have to choose whether to accept and to try to live up to God's commands to us. God has commanded us to "*love one another.*" We are to hold each other in the esteem, respect, and love that God holds for us.

This command is the second of the Great Commandments, as our Lord explained. When asked, He told the Pharisee who questioned Him, "*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?*" Jesus told the man, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.*"<sup>7</sup>

Will we choose to obey this commandment or will we not? Jesus reminds us that this choice has consequences, as do all of our choices. If we choose to follow God's law, then we may face criticism, envy, opposition, and even hatred, from

those who do not follow His law. This can be painful, and, sadly, it causes some to fall away from God as they choose to follow some other path.

Just as we may face ridicule because we choose to surround ourselves with people who share our values rather than with the "in-crowd," we may face ridicule for choosing to follow God's law. Those who do not live principled lives often resent those who do. Perhaps they know that those who choose to follow God's path have wondrous rewards in store and they are jealous.

Just as being a good worker can draw criticism from those who are not so dedicated, showing your dedication to God's commands can make us subject to criticism for earnestly trying to follow God's will in our lives.

In today's world, if we choose to follow God's law and explain clearly and honestly why we cannot instead follow the mandates of political correctness, of popular opinion, or of current whim, we are called all sorts of vile names. Our honor is besmirched, our motives are called into question and we end up under a microscope as those, who do not choose to live God's way, try to find some fault in those who do so choose.

Jesus knows all about this, and He offers us comfort for those times when we face such trying pressure from the world: "*If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*"<sup>8</sup>

If then, we face the enmity of the world because we refuse to go along with the crowd, we can at least draw comfort from knowing that we walk beside our Lord. He faced the wrath of the world before we did, and He defeated those forces of evil. If we remain faithful, we too will be victorious with Him.