

Sermon for Morning Prayer
The Twelfth Sunday After Trinity

I. Lessons:¹

A. The First Lesson: Here beginneth the thirty-eighth Chapter of the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus.²

“Honour a physician with the honour due unto him for the uses which ye may have of him: for the Lord hath created him. For of the most High cometh healing, and he shall receive honour of the king. The skill of the physician shall lift up his head: and in the sight of great men he shall be in admiration. The Lord hath created medicines out of the earth; and he that is wise will not abhor them. Was not the water made sweet with wood, that the virtue thereof might be known? And he hath given men skill, that he might be honoured in his marvellous works. With such doth he heal [men,] and taketh away their pains. Of such doth the apothecary make a confection; and of his works there is no end; and from him is peace over all the earth, My son, in thy sickness be not negligent: but pray unto the Lord, and he will make thee whole. Leave off from sin, and order thine hands aright, and cleanse thy heart from all wickedness. Give a sweet savour, and a memorial of fine flour; and make a fat offering, as not being. Then give place to the physician, for the Lord hath created him: let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him. There is a time when in their hands there is good success. For they shall also pray unto the Lord, that he would prosper that, which they give for ease and remedy to prolong life.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

B. The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the thirty-first Verse of the fourth Chapter of the Gospel According to St. Luke.³

“And [Jesus] came down to Capernaum [**kah-PURR-nah-umm**], a city of Galilee [**GAL-ih-lee**], and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

“And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

“And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon’s house. And Simon’s wife’s mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

“Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

II. Text:

From the Second Lesson: “And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.”⁴ In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

III. Introduction, Theme, and Development:

In today’s Second Lesson, St. Luke recounts how those who heard Jesus in person felt some quality in his teaching that made it stand out, distinct from the rabbinical and scholarly lectures they were accustomed to hearing. Those whom St. Luke quotes seem to have been unable to describe precisely what that difference was, so they fell back on describing the impression it made on them, the listeners.

That impression was one of *power*. Elsewhere in the Gospels, others described it as His speaking with *authority*.⁵ We, with the benefit of knowing what the late Paul Harvey⁶ would have called “the ressst of the story”, recognize that what His listeners were feeling and responding to was simply the presence, and therefore the power, of God.

That is, while the congregation in the synagogue did not know consciously that the Man who sat before them, expounding the Scriptures, was Himself the Word of God,⁷ nevertheless they were able to perceive that He communicated the reality of God’s message to them in a far more immediate and effective way than did the teachers to whom they were accustomed.

That God was indeed present with them is attested by the six discrete events reported in this particular portion from St. Luke. First, our Lord expounded the Scriptures in a synagogue. Second – and on the same occasion and in the same place as that preaching -- He freed a man from possession by an unclean spirit. Third, He healed Simon Peter’s mother in

law. Fourth, He healed numerous others. Fifth, He freed others from possession by demons. And, sixth, He returned to the synagogues and preached.

Notice the arrangement of these events. Two sermons, teaching and explaining God's message to humanity, stand as book ends around four healings of minds and bodies. Those healings, in turn, are equally composed of two that evidence Christ's power over unseen forces and two that show His command of physical bodies.

In other words, Christ's teaching of God's word introduces four irrefutable proofs that God commands everything that has been created, both the seen and the unseen. Then that lesson is reiterated by further teaching.

IV. Conclusion:

Like those ancient Jews, we, too, must wish to experience the power of God, acting in the world in which we live. To do so, however, we must do as they did. Just as they went first to the synagogue, the accustomed place to hear the Scriptures read and expounded, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...."⁸ So we, too, must place ourselves where we know we will find the presence of God.

That is one reason those are wrong who say they do not need to attend the public worship of the church because they can pray just as well at home: God's covenant promise to be with us is that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."⁹

This makes clear that while He is often with us at other times, He will infallibly be with us when we meet as a group to worship Him.

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The Rev'd Canon John A. Hollister, J.D.¹⁰
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¹ *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

² *Ecclesiasticus* 38: 1-14 (KJV).

³ St. Luke 4: 31-44 (KJV).

⁴ St. Luke 4: 32 (KJV).

⁵ St. Luke 4: 32 (RSV); St. Matthew 7: 28-29 (KJV).

⁶ Paul Harvey Aurandt (1918-2009), for many years host of highly popular radio commentaries on the ABC network.

⁷ St. John 1: 1b.

⁸ Hebrews 10: 25 (KJV).

⁹ St. Matthew 18: 20 (KJV).

¹⁰ Priest Associate, Christ Anglican Catholic Church, New Orleans (Metairie), LA. Honorary Canon, the Diocese of the Resurrection, and Honorary Canon and Canon to the Ordinary, The Diocese of New Orleans, The Anglican Catholic Church.