

**SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER**  
**The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity<sup>1</sup>**

**Lessons:**

**The First Lesson:**<sup>2</sup> Here beginneth the twelfth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.<sup>3</sup>

“And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:**<sup>4</sup> Here beginneth the thirteenth Verse of the third Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians.<sup>5</sup>

“... I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all

that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

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. Amen.**

When we read our Epistle lection for this morning, we see that St. Paul is trying to convey the necessity of knowing the fullness of the Love of God. Note that this specific book to the Ephesians was written while St. Paul was in prison in Rome and was probably written to all the churches in Asia Minor of which Ephesus was the capital or episcopal see, if you will, as a tract to remind them of the basic tenets of the Christian faith.

You can actually see the marks of Paul’s imprisonment as we begin the third and fourth chapters, because he refers to himself as “*the prisoner of Jesus Christ*” in chapter 3 and “*the prisoner of the Lord*” in chapter 4. He also refers to the tribulations he is presently suffering for the Church.

But how can Paul begin to write on the Love of God when he himself sits in a prison cell for the very Love of God in which he is trying to convey? He had a greater purpose in mind which drove him to the very depths of the captor’s imprisonment. He knew that if he followed the example of the Father’s Love as shown by Christ, that those who heard and read this message might be more readily to accept the message of this Love. The example of Christ was when He hung on the Cross, He had us in mind, and made up His mind, in that moment, as He had the discourse with St. Dismas, the thief, that He would

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Epistle for Holy Communion on the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), The Book of Common Prayer xxxiv (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 12:1-end (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> “Upon any Sunday or Holy Day, the Minister may read the Epistle or the Gospel of the Day in place of the Second Lesson at Morning or Evening Prayer.” *Concerning the Service of the Church*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER viii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 3:13-21 (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> St. Luke 4: 16-21.

<sup>7</sup> Rector, St. Charles King and Martyr Anglican Church, Huntsville, AL.

partakers of His Divinity, but we can express His Divinity to a lost and dying world. So that the salvation of our souls doesn't end with our being born again in baptism, but continues on to those with whom we share His love and compassion, His mercy and grace.

Both Paul and Christ willingly gave up their lives, being devoted to living out the fullness of God's Divine Love. How do we measure up to this? Have we suffered for the cause of the Gospel? Have we enough compassion on fellow mankind to withstand any kind of tribulation? Are we afraid to stand up and show God's love in mercy to those around us, fearing that we may be ridiculed or persecuted? And then comes the all famous question, "If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

Where would we be if those like SS. Peter, Paul, Stephen and Bartholomew kept to themselves the saving message of the fullness of God's love? The world would not have been turned upside down with God's restorative power through the Cross of Jesus Christ. God wants us to *know* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of God's love for us, but if we don't *share* this love, then we can say our own salvation was in vain.

After twenty-one centuries, we have to proclaim with complete conviction that the Spirit of Christ has not lost its redemptive force, which alone can satisfy the desires of the human heart. Begin by feeding that truth into your own heart, which will be perpetually restless, as St. Augustine wrote, until it rests entirely in God.

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The Rev'd Steven Victory<sup>7</sup>  
September 23, 2013

rather go to the depths of hell for us now, then to spend eternity in heaven without us later.

That is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height that St Paul was writing about to the Ephesians. The compassion that we see Christ having for the Widow of Nain's son in our Gospel lection, the compassion that He had on all of humanity, those for whom He came to shed His blood, is the measure of Christ's love for us. And as Christ was strengthened in the Spirit of His Father during His trial, flagellation, and gruesome death, St. Paul prays that according to the riches of His Glory, we may be strengthened with His might by that same Spirit in our inner man.

Why? One reason is that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and another is that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ for our selves, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God.

And you probably thought we were baptized in Christ Jesus, to sit here in our comfortable pews on Sundays to receive three points and a poem during the sermon, and to receive the reality of His presence in the Most Holy Eucharist, so we can go on our merry way oblivious to the state of wickedness and death that surrounds us day in and day out.

The fullness of God of which St. Paul is speaking is not just knowing the love that God has for us as individual believers, but being rooted and grounded in that love, we are to go out and show compassion, or shared suffering, to the rest of the world, so that they too may be granted, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in their inner man, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith.

As First John 3:16-17 would put it, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowls of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” If the love of God is put into our relationship, friendships, and the dealings we have with those we come into contact every day, St. Josemaria Escriva, founder of the apostolate Opus Dei, points out in his book *Furrow* that “they are cleansed, reinforced, and spiritualized, because all the dross, all the selfish points of view, and excessively worldly considerations are burned away. Never forget that the love of God puts our affection in order, and purifies them without diminishing them.”

He also goes on to say, “Love good people because they love Christ. Love those too who do not love Him because of their misfortune, and especially because Christ loves both kinds of people.”

St. Paul wasn’t comfortable just sitting there talking about God’s love only amongst the individual believers of the Church. He became an offence to the secular, pagan society in which surrounded him by exposing the Father’s love to everyone with whom he came into contact, whether pauper or prince. He was so radically changed by Divine Love that he wanted everyone to experience the same. He wasn’t verbally abusive; he didn’t go about being a nuisance to those with whom he came in contact, he just expressed the never-ending, unending love of God, through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. So much, that he eventually became that offence, an unsettling presence in this life, and it cost him his life, as he was beheaded in Rome by the emperor Nero.

Paul tells the Ephesians that his tribulation for them is their glory, and to faint not. Jesus said the same when He exclaimed, “IT IS FINISHED.”

But the question at hand is, are we compassionate enough to see the dead men walking all around us, who await the very word of God to be spoken so that their spirits can be quickened and their lives be resurrected by the power of the Holy Ghost? Most men in our secular, humanistic culture are dead and on their way to be buried, all the while we pass up the procession in fear of being branded a fool for Christ. Paul is pleading with us to become fools, he is praying in our Epistle lesson that we lose our mind, and gain the mind of Christ.

And what is the mind of Christ? Why was He sent? What is the fullness of God’s love, and ministry of the Triune Godhead? Jesus expresses this perfectly in St. Luke’s Gospel, where it says, “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”<sup>6</sup>

That’s the fullness of the love of God. He loves us enough to give us the good news, to proclaim freedom to the captives, and give recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed. But he doesn’t do these things for us, for us to be silent and comfortable in our pews Sunday in and Sunday out. He gives us His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Most Blessed Sacrament so that we unite ourselves to Him, to be infiltrated and consummated by His Soul so we can not only be