

Morning Prayer A

Sunday, October 25, 2015

Sermon presented by Andrew Staley, Lay Reader

First Lesson: Isa 59:15b-21

Here beginneth the fifteenth verse of the fifty-ninth chapter of the Prophet Isaiah.

... the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

18 According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence.

19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thyseed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

Here endeth the First Lesson.

Second Lesson: 2 Cor 10:1-7, 17-18
Here beginneth the tenth chapter of
the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

2 But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? if any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily

There is a war going on.

This is not a message about foreign affairs, but it is about the very real situation

in which we, as Christians, find ourselves.

There is a war going on,
and we find ourselves in the middle of it.

It's not the type of war
that is fought with guns and bombs,
nor is it fought with propaganda
or demonstrations or pressure groups.

This war is neither military nor political,
though it affects both realms,
but make no mistake: it is war.

We heard St. Paul:

"... though we walk in the flesh,
we do not war after the flesh:
(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,
but mighty through God
to the pulling down of strong holds;)"

Have you not noticed
that this world is no friend to the Gospel of Christ?
In politics, in foreign affairs,
in the conduct of public figures,
in entertainment, in what is taught in schools,
in the assumptions held by almost everyone,
including the basic assumptions of most Christians,
and in the daily actions and conversations
of pretty nearly everyone,
including most of us a good part of the time,

both the standards of God's moral law,
and the Gospel standard of mercy
are consistently trampled upon.

And so, as our reading from Isaiah began:

"... the LORD saw it, and it displeased him
that there was no judgment. "

God is not pleased that man opposes His Word.

God is not pleased

when His own called and chosen people
accept the ways and the thought patterns
of a fallen world --
when there is no judgment.

The first of all the commandments is this:
"Thou shalt have none other gods but me."
The "first and great commandment is this:
"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,
and with all thy mind."

This world
accepts any authority other than that of God,
whether it be government, ideology, patriotism,
or comfort, material gain, or pleasure,
or, as it all too often is,
the tyranny of what 'everyone' does or says
or thinks.

These are other gods.
These are diversions of our love,
our hearts, souls, and minds,
from loving God Himself.
There is a war going on.

Satan and his legion of fallen angels
are steadfast in their opposition to God's truth.
Their lies are to be heard and seen in all the world,
even, sad to say, in the churches.
The powers of evil rejoice
in every acceptance of their lies,
whether by those we see as evil,
or by those we applaud;
and they accept it as worship of themselves
as gods.
There is a war going on,
and we have a part in it.

As St. Paul says:

"Casting down imaginations,
and every high thing that exalteth itself
against the knowledge of God,
and bringing into captivity every thought
to the obedience of Christ;

Notice that it begins in ourselves.

We, all of us, are battlefields.

We are constantly tempted by unholy imaginings,
by pride and self-pleasing,
by the spirit of that old song

"I had to do it MY way."

It is our own thoughts that need to be brought
into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

"And having in a readiness
to revenge all disobedience,
when your obedience is fulfilled."

Have you noticed the subtle echo
of Our Lord's words in St. John, chapter 8?

"Let him that is without sin cast the first stone."

Yes, we are God's instruments in this world.

Yes, we are called to bring His Word
and to call sinners to repentance, to change.

But the first repentance, the first change,
the first renewal of obedience must be within us,
and when this is so, as Isaiah said:

"As for me, this is my covenant with them,
saith the LORD;

My spirit that is upon thee,
and my words which I have put in thy mouth,
shall not depart out of thy mouth,
nor out of the mouth of thy seed,
nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed,
saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever."

Let us pray.

O God, merciful Father, who despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as are sorrowful; mercifully assist our prayers which we make before thee in all our troubles and adversities, whensoever they oppress us, from within or without; and graciously hear us, that those evils which the craft and subtilty of the devil or man worketh against us, may, by thy good providence, be brought to nought; that we thy servants, being hurt by no persecutions, may march forth in thy service, and evermore give thanks unto thee in the holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.
