

**Addresses for Morning and Evening Prayer according to the 1943 Lectionary of the USA 1928 Book of Common Prayer Intended for use by Layreaders in the absence of a priest by Ed Pacht Rochester NH
Second before Advent**

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First Lesson

Isa 2:6-19 Here beginneth the sixth verse of the second chapter of the Prophet Isaiah:

6 Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. 7 Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: 8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: 9 And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not. 10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. 11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 12 For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: 13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, 14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, 15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, 16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. 17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish. 19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

Here endeth the First Lesson

Second Lesson

Matt 25:14-29 Here beginneth the fourteenth verse of the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew:

14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. 16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily

Does this sound familiar? Isaiah's talking about a remnant of the chosen people. They've withdrawn from what they knew. They've left behind a great deal. Back where they came from is gold and silver, lots of horses, lots of chariots, and, oh yes, sexual freedom, and along with that a certain spirituality, the soothsayers, today we'd call them channellers. Givers of spiritual advice without God, without obedience. These are religious people they have left. Oh yes, they believe in God -- in lots of gods. They have idols. They bow down before them, they serve them, and ask them for favor, but false gods are only reflections of their own unruly, unhealthy desires. It is their own pride, their own greed, their own lust that they worship, that they serve, that ends up controlling them.

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

That's His call to the people He has chosen., and His people have turned away from Him. Does this sound like our own time? Does it maybe sound a lot like the religion being proclaimed in the places we came from? They had to leave, though it cost them dearly. So did we, and there has been a cost, and we likely will never have what we once had, at least not this side of Heaven's gates. "Enter into the rock," says Isaiah, "and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. " God didn't tell them to fix what was broken. He didn't leave it to them to change men's minds. What he said was that judgment was coming, that the hot displeasure of the Lord was imminent. "Find a place of shelter," the prophet warned. "Get out of the way. You don't want to be in the midst when judgment falls, for the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and it won't be pretty this time. Isaiah richly describes total destruction, and promises that it shall come. Is this exactly the way things stand today? Well, we cannot know that, not really, but we can surely see the thorough turning away of God's own people from His declared will. WE can surely see how much this time is like that. Do we want to be in the way when judgment comes?

Well we have withdrawn, though others have stayed in a vain attempt to fix the problems. We've left a lot of good things behind, what we have seems often a pale reflection of the past, but we've come away with a treasure. We are custodians of precious coin, of Scripture and Tradition, of God's truth. Yes, we have our treasure in earthen vessels. We often fail to appreciate it. We sometimes manage to feel deprived, but we have a treasure. What are we doing with it? Did you listen to Our Lord's parable? We're like the third servant, the one who received the least, or at least it often seems that way. Most of our parishes are small. Most are worshiping in rented space, rather than in their own buildings. Most of our clergy are part time, needing to make part of their own living. Even those more fortunate parishes are small and poor by the old standards. But we have a treasure. What are we doing with it? Are we burying it like he did? Are we protecting it lest something be lost? Are we merely defensive? Or are we putting our treasure to work. Are we using it, maybe taking risks, working hard to gain something for our Lord?

Is His investment in us bearing fruit? Are souls coming into His presence? Are the hungry being fed and the naked clothed? Is comfort coming to the prisoners and the lonely? Will He know us on that day? Will we enter into the joy of the Lord?

Let us pray:

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.