

THE 2023 APA DEANERY OF APPALACHIA

Lenten Devotional

Meditations on Passages from
the 1928 BCP Daily Office Lectionary
with Sunday Homilies
by Various Church Fathers

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Prologue

In the first years of the Christian Church, it was natural for the followers of Christ to acknowledge the anniversary of the resurrection of our Lord. The Paschal feast was, and remains today, the central feast of the Christian Kalendar. Before long it became obvious in those early years that we should not let that important feast day of the resurrection sneak up on us. Thus, the season of Lent was one of the earliest extended periods of time to find a permanent place in our annual cycle. It is a season of preparation.

In one sense, Lent has the singular purpose of setting aside time to prepare the faithful for a joyous and holy Easter feast. Upon closer inspection, though, the forty days of Lent give Christians an opportunity to walk with Christ in the desert, to absorb the narrative of His passion, to acknowledge the institution of the Holy Eucharist, to sense anew the sorrow and confusion of the first Good Friday, and to appreciate again the new fire of Christ lit in the dark heart of death. Each year the Church offers several weeks to learn something new about what it means to live in the light of Christ in this world.

This Lenten Devotional has been composed by those ordained or called to care for the parishioners of the APA Deanery of Appalachia with the purpose of enhancing the experience of Lent for those who read its pages in these 40 days leading up to Easter.

Scriptures used for reference are generally taken from the Morning or Evening Prayer Offices of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer.

Devotional compositions offered for the Sundays of Lent are taken from homilies of various Church Fathers and apply to the Gospel selection of the Order for Holy Communion. On these days, Anglican faithful will hopefully find it edifying to hear both a sermon on the passage from their Rector, and then to consider those thoughts along with the thoughts of one of the great theologians of the Patristic era.

It is my prayer that, when the great feast of Easter finally arrives, those who use this devotional can say that something within these pages served to keep them on the straight and narrow path towards the goal that the Church has always intended for the season of Lent – a joyful, holy, and glorious Easter feast!

Father Paul Rivard
Dean of Appalachia, APA
Rector of Saint George the Martyr Anglican Church
Simpsonville, SC



Ash Wednesday, February 22

*“... to fight under his banner,
against sin, the world, and the devil...”*

Today is the microcosm of the entire Christian life. We are perpetually engaged in the continual spiritual battle, the lifelong Lent, against the world, the flesh, and the devil – united to Christ in His war against and victory over sin, Satan, and death. The entire Christian life is asceticism, struggle, effort, combat, against our spiritual foe, in which we are to allow Christ to have the victory in us and through us, to allow the Kingdom of God to prevail in our own lives and souls. ‘Like a mighty army moves the Church of God, brethren we are treading where the saints have trod.’ Our Lord wishes to reproduce His life, His triumph, His Resurrection in our lives, and can only do so if evil is thwarted on the battleground of our souls. Our soul is the main battlefield, the ultimate contest. Every Christian must face this conflict head on – there is a war on for our own souls and the souls of the entire human race. We cannot escape evil; rather, we must confront it and defeat it with the theological and cardinal virtues: faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. It is the Holy Ghost who gives us the grace and power to vanquish Satan in the Name of Christ.

The Lent of Life is 1. against the devil – prayer, 2. against the flesh – fasting, and 3. against the world – almsgiving. Our Lord was so tempted... to create stones out of bread

(the flesh), to cast himself from the temple to abuse His divine power (the devil), and to inherit the kingdoms of the world through satanic service (the world). Our Lord went into the desert to keep the first Lent and to be tempted and to overcome temptation – and so we are called throughout life to follow Him who is the one who blazed the trail of faith, hope, love, and obedience in the desert of the world. We take up our crosses and follow the author and finisher of our faith.

The Temptation of Christ was for our sake – the Holy Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus Christ in the desert immediately after his Baptism by John the Baptist. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, the Lord Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him. At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert, and the devil leaves him ‘until an opportune time.’

The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus Christ is the New Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Our Lord fulfills Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, the Lord Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he ‘binds the strong man’ to take back his plunder. Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father.

Our Saviour's temptation reveals the way in which the Eternal Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to Him and the way men wish to attribute to Him. This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: 'For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning.'

By the solemn forty days of Lent, the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert. The temptation in the desert shows Jesus, the humble Messiah, who triumphs over Satan by his total adherence to the plan of salvation willed by the Father.

The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: 'If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.' Jesus' exorcisms free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Our Lord's great victory over 'the ruler of this world.' The kingdom of God is definitively established through Christ's Cross: 'God is reigning from the tree.'

Let us remember what was said to us in our Baptism as we begin Lent this year: "We receive this Child into the congregation of Christ's flock; and do sign ✠ him with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end. Amen."

The Most Reverend Chandler Holder Jones
Presiding Bishop, Anglican Province of America
Bishop, APA Diocese of the Eastern United States

Thursday after Quinquagesima, February 23

Evening Prayer, First Lesson – Jeremiah 1:4-10, 13-19

“Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 1:8).

In the first chapter of the book of the prophet Jeremiah, we receive a brief glimpse into Jeremiah’s “origin story.” The story of Jeremiah’s ministry begins with God’s omniscient perspective applied to His chosen man. God begins, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5). In other words, don’t bother offering an excuse because you were always going to be a prophet. Promptly and succinctly Jeremiah then offers an excuse. “Lord, I cannot serve as a prophet because I am like a child. I would stand amongst your wayward people and not have a clue as to what I should say.”

God is used to this kind of reluctance. Moses was reluctant (Exodus 3:11), Isaiah was not so sure (Isaiah 6:5), and Saint Peter would one day say what all people who receive a calling in the presence of God feel like saying, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). But, as He usually does, God continues on with the calling, nearly ignoring the cry of inadequacy. As it was with Isaiah, so it became with Jeremiah that the Lord would touch the lips of the prophet so that the words proceeding out of that

inadequate man would be words from God rather than from “a child.”

One might think that this would be enough to embolden a prophet to confront evil and rebellion in the name of God. But God knows that his prophet is capable of faltering even with commission like this one. Two times God instructs Jeremiah not to be afraid “of their faces” (1:8, 17), in the latter instance adding, “lest I confound thee before them.” In other words, at the time when you are ready to confront evil, and after you have practiced your stern speech in front of the mirror, keep your nerve when it counts! When you actually see their faces, keep your nerve and speak the words I gave you to speak.

When we consider the ministry of the prophets during the season of Lent, we may root for them as our spiritual “black-belts,” cheering them on as they confront the wicked and boldly stand in the face of opposition. But we must recognize that the call of the prophet to confront evil is the same call that God gives us. Unlike the prophets, our work in this season is not primarily pointing out the sin in others. We are to see the face in the mirror and call out the sin in ourselves.

The season of Lent is on in which we must keep our nerve, and speak to ourselves the words that we know God has given us. It is a time to drop the excuses. We were always going to be required to speak the truth. We were always going to be required to grow up from childish ways into full adulthood. Lent is a focused time in which we are to take this call to maturity more seriously.

Father Paul Rivard

Rector of Saint George the Martyr Anglican Church
Simpsonville, SC

Saint Matthias, February 24

Gospel for Holy Communion – Matthew 11:25-30

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29-30).

As we celebrate the feast day of St. Matthias today, it is interesting to know that there is no mention of him in the three synoptic gospels. But according to Acts, he had been with Jesus from his baptism by John until his Ascension. He was chosen to become an apostle by Peter following the death of Jesus in order to replace Judas. Tradition has St. Matthias establishing early churches in Ethiopia, preaching to the cannibals and barbarians, where he was eventually martyred for his faith.

In this passage, Jesus thanks the Father for revealing his mysteries to the little ones and hiding them from the wise and the intelligent. As I join Jesus in thanking the Father for revealing himself to us, I ask for the grace to be among the little ones, able to thank God and to wonder at his greatness, especially the greatness of his love and compassion for us all.

In what must be one of the most beautiful texts of the gospel, Jesus bares his soul: He speaks of his unique relationship to the Father and of his deep desire to embrace us in our weakness and weariness. I listen attentively to these words as I become aware that my weariness is the door into the gentle mercy of Jesus.

Sometimes life's burdens can overwhelm us and we live with uncertainty and the fear that we will be swallowed up in despair and lack of hope. Here, in this passage, Jesus offers us a lifeline, "Come unto me...for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Sounds simple, doesn't it? And yet we find it difficult to believe that reaching out to Him can make a difference.

"...I become aware that my weariness is the door into the gentle mercy of Jesus."

I reflect on the burdens I am carrying. I bring them to Jesus. In essence, I transfer my load to his yoke. And when I do, He takes my burdens upon his shoulders and allows me to rest within his grace, and love. I ask for the grace to be aware that I am never alone in my weariness, for He is there.

Father Ted Leenerts

Assisting at Holy Cross Anglican Church

Farragut, TN

Saturday after Quinquagesima, February 25

Evening Prayer, First Lesson – Jeremiah 3:11-18

*Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord;
and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you:
for I am merciful, saith the Lord,
and I will not keep anger forever (Jeremiah 3:12).*

The Prophet Jeremiah knows the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Proverbs: 9:10) He knows too that a proper fear of the Lord comes from that healthy awesome wonder that claims and confesses the difference between the Creator and His creation. Created fallen man must return to his spiritual senses according to Jeremiah. He must remember God's omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and then omnibenevolence. He must remember his own sinfulness and his particular besetting sins.

God stands against all sin because He is pure goodness. God stands against all backsliding into unrighteousness because He is pure goodness and naturally desires man's redemption. God longs for union with His people.

In this Lenten Season, the Prophet calls us to repentance. The wholesome and mature man repents because he is in full and honest possession of self-

knowledge. “Know thyself,” the Delphic Oracle of Apollo commanded the ancient Greeks. “Know thyself and confess the substance of thyself.” This is needful for reconciliation with God. Other people’s sins are none of our business. We Christians are in the business of confessing our sins and not calling out those of others. We Christians must allow the Lord Jesus to work out all our sin and work in the righteousness of His Father.

“We Christians must allow the Lord Jesus to work out all our sin and work in the righteousness of His Father.”

Christians ought not to be lukewarm and half-hearted. Christians must acknowledge and confess their sins to another Christian or, preferably, to a clergyman. Should we persist in sin, we shall go to Hell. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And even then, we do this so that God’s will may be done in us, that His Word may be made flesh in us, that His righteousness may move and define us, that His anger should be turned away from us.

Father William Martin
Rector of Saint Michael and All Angels
Arden, NC

Lent 1 – Sunday, February 26

Homily for Lent 1

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – Matthew 4:1-11

by Saint Gregory the Great

(Homily 16 on the Gospels, Anglican Breviary C211-12)

Some are wont to question as to what spirit it was of which Jesus was led up into the wilderness, on account of the words a little farther on, “Then the devil taketh him up into the holy City.” And again, “The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain.” But verily, and without question, we must take this passage to mean that it was the Holy Spirit who led him up into the wilderness. His own Spirit led Him where the evil spirit might find Him to tempt Him. But behold, when it is said that the God-Man was taken up by the devil either into an exceeding high mountain, or into the holy city, the mind shrinketh from believing, and the ears of man shudder at hearing it. Yet these things are not incredible, when we consider certain other things concerning him.

Verily, the devil is the head of all the wicked and every wicked man is a member of the body of wickedness, of which the devil is the head. Was not Pilate a limb of Satan? Were not the Jews that persecuted Christ, and the soldiers that crucified Him, likewise limbs of Satan? Is it then strange that He should allow Himself to be led up into a mountain by

the head, when He allowed himself to be crucified by the members thereof? Wherefore it is not unworthy of our Redeemer, who came to be slain, that He was willing to be tempted. Rather, it was meet that He should overcome our temptations by his own temptations, even as he came to conquer our death by his own death.

“... it was meet that He should overcome our temptations by His own temptations, even as He came to conquer our death by His own death.”

But we ought to keep in mind that temptation beareth us onward by three steps. There is, first, the suggestion; then the delectation; lastly, the consent. When we are tempted, we oft-times give way to delectation and even to consent, because in the sinful flesh of which we are begotten, we carry in ourselves matter to favour the attack of sin. But God, when he took flesh in the womb of the Virgin, and came into the world without sin, did so without having in Himself anything of this contradiction. It was possible therefore for Him to be tempted in the first stage, namely suggestion; but delectation could find nothing in His soul wherein to fix its teeth. Wherefore all the temptation which He endured from the devil was without, for none was within him.

Lent 1 – Monday, February 27

Evening Prayer, First Lesson – Jeremiah 3:19-25

“Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.... Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings”
(Jeremiah 3:20, 22).

The prophets of the ancient world were held in great respect by the Jewish people. They were considered the actual messengers of God. Their prophecies, warnings and demands were considered those of God Himself.

Jeremiah, the “weeping prophet,” was approached by God in his young years and was among the greatest of the era of the prophets.

In the particular verses appointed for Evening Prayer today, Jeremiah admonishes the Jewish people for their failures and sins. These people were worshipping pagan gods, and living lives filled with sin and complete disregard for the Ten Commandments.

Jeremiah tells the Jewish people that they have polluted the very earth. However, he uses lessons from the book of Deuteronomy to let the Jewish people know that God is in fact willing to show more mercy to

them than what the law seems to demand. He will show them more grace than they deserve.

In the book of Deuteronomy if a husband divorces his wife and she then marries another or is defiled, he is not allowed to take her back (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). In this lesson, Jeremiah tells the Jewish people that if they will simply reform and come back to him and follow his commandments, He will receive them with open arms and forgive them their sins.

“God has always been willing to give man the chance to change his life and return to Him.”

This lesson is indeed proof that God has always been willing to give man the chance to change his life and return to Him. It shows the very special love that God has towards mankind.

Deacon Louis Linn
All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Lent 1 – Tuesday, February 28

Evening Prayer, First Lesson – Jeremiah 4:1-9

“Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem” (Jeremiah 4:4a).

Christianity gives us many opportunities to outwardly practice our faith. Think about when we cross ourselves or when we bow or genuflect toward the Altar or even when you received ashes on your forehead during the Ash Wednesday service.

In the Prophet Jeremiah’s day, Jews also had many opportunities to outwardly practice their faith. The problem that he noticed in his own day was that people were outwardly worshiping God though their hearts were not. He highlighted this disconnect between body and soul by recommending a circumcision of heart along with the circumcision of the flesh. Notice that he does not abolish the practice.

The practice is not the issue. The unity between action and belief is the problem.

The prophet reminded the Jews, and reminds us today, that the outward action must correspond to what is in our heart for it to be pleasing to God.

“The practice is not the issue. The unity between action and belief is the problem.”

When you cross yourself, you are making the holy sign of the Cross with your body. You are saying with your body what your heart believes. Bowing at the Altar is confirming with your body what your heart already knows.

We are body and soul and so our faith is physical as well as spiritual. The ashes that you received a few days ago should be the outward expression of the inward repentance that is in your heart. We could borrow the language of the prophet and say “bear these ashes to the Lord, mark also your heart with ashes.”

Father Scott Greene
Rector of Holy Cross Anglican Church
Farragut, TN

Lent 1 – Ember Wednesday, March 1

Morning Prayer, Second Lesson – Matthew 9:1-13

“Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee”
(Matthew 9:2b).

Today we begin the first of four annual ember seasons (March, June, September, and December) in which we make a practice of intentionally praying for the ordained ministry of the Church. One may guess that it is not accidental that the second lesson for Morning Prayer involves the theological rationale behind what is perhaps the heaviest responsibility of the priesthood, that is, their instrumental role in the forgiveness of sins.

The passage begins with an astoundingly bold claim of Christ about Himself. Jesus enters into His own city with his disciples and encounters a man “sick of the palsy,” and I would bet he was sick of it. Strangely however, though He had the power to heal the palsy, Jesus refrains and declares that the man should be of good cheer for his sins are forgiven. How many hospital beds today are occupied by people who are “sick of the palsy” and, given the choice of physical healing or spiritual healing, suppose they can only find cheer if their body was well? Jesus declares that true cheer is justified with the forgiveness of sins, regardless of physical health. To some people, this is blasphemy indeed.

The scribes said in their hearts, quite correctly, that none can forgive sins but God alone. Jesus, knowing their

thoughts, wished to prove to them not that he could heal the sick, but that he had the power to forgive sins. Jesus used the healing of the palsied man to prove that he had the power to forgive sins, but the healing of that body was not the essential act, it was a bonus. The palsied man had reason enough for cheer before his physical healing took place.

When Jesus rose from the dead and appeared in the upper room in John 20:19-23, it was as if he could not wait to give them the Holy Spirit that He had promised so many times during the farewell discourse of the previous several chapters. And when he had breathed on them and said “receive ye the Holy Ghost” he added the shocking declaration, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” The authority to forgive sins which had caused such an uproar in Capernaum had now been delegated by Christ to those who would stand in His place as shepherds of His flock, as overseers of His Church.

To this day many, even within the Church, say in their hearts precisely what the scribes said, “Blasphemy, only God can forgive sins.” The proper reaction to this is to recall precisely what Jesus proved by healing the palsied man. He proved that the statement is correct, only God forgives sin. But added to that truth is a more astounding truth; that God forgives sin by whatever means He sees fit. He could forgive sins by divine fiat, but He chose to forgive sins through the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity. This is a much more painful, involved, messy and complicated means. So that we never forget the reality of that incarnation, He extends His incarnational ministry by

forgiving sin through the men who stand in his place and in his person at the altar of God. An astoundingly bold reality, and a heavy responsibility indeed.

Sometimes a physical healing is granted to be sure that people get the picture, but not always, and not often even. For the real reason we are to be of good cheer is that our sins are forgiven. Now, along with the multitudes of Matthew 9:8, we must “marvel, and glorify God, which has given such power unto men.” Along with the Church we must pray for those upon whom Christ breathes the Holy Spirit to delegate his awesome authority.

Father Paul Rivard
Rector of Saint George the Martyr Anglican Church
Simpsonville, SC

Lent 1 – Thursday, March 2

Evening Prayer, First Lesson – Jeremiah 4:11-22

“Behold, he shall come...and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind...Woe unto us for we are spoiled”
(Jeremiah 4:13).

The winds of change blew mightily across the land of God's chosen people. Certainty was non-existent. The future was insecure. Instability ruled. Wayward Israel and Judah were assailed on all sides by the 7th century BC world powers Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt. “Destruction upon destruction (was) cried, for the whole land (was) spoiled”. “The sound of the trumpet (and) the alarm of war” were incessant and insatiable. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had already fallen under the mighty hand of the Assyrians and their king Shalmaneser V. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was greatly threatened by the power of the lion Babylon and her king Nebuchadnezzar roaring down from the north.

Within this milieu of turmoil and despair, the Judean “weeping prophet” Jeremiah warned the Southern Kingdom of the imminent judgment of God in the form of the destruction of Jerusalem and deportation to Babylon. With angst and sorrow, Jeremiah was “pained at (his) very heart” for his beloved people and begged

them with Divine portent: “Oh Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.”

This priest-descended prophet of poetic bent warned the people of Judah of the “dry wind of high places” that was coming “not to fan, nor to cleanse” but with “full wind (to) give sentence against them” with the judgment of God for their “vain thoughts lodged within them.” But, alas, Judah looked not vertically for divine deliverance but horizontally to the south in a foolish attempt to ally with the Egyptians. But alas again, these “sottish children...wise to do evil,” but with no knowledge of good, foolishly failed to know God and ultimately succumbed to the Babylonian and Divine whirlwind of destruction.

These sobering but beautiful words of the prophet Jeremiah literally and metaphorically capture not only a portion of the history of Israel and Judah but also a nearly complete history of the relationship of mankind with God. The absolute uncertainty of 7th century Judah rings true today and always. For, indeed, man knoweth not his time. We, who were born with eternity in our hearts, live on shifting sands of time and, like Donne’s personified death, “art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men.” But, mostly and most importantly, we are slaves to sin and to ourselves. We are assailed and besieged from all sides by ourselves, by the world, and by principalities and powers.

Yet, we are so often unmindful that we are but dust. We suffer with blindness from the ubiquitous human condition of spiritual myopia. We fail to fix our eyes on Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Within our hearts, we raise our fists against heaven, stoke and stroke our foolish pride, and fail to go in the strength of the Lord. Like Judah, we fail to hear the warnings of the already captured Ephraim and Dan. Like Judah, we ignore the witness of creation, our consciences, and the prophets. Like Judah, we need the full wind of God and the whirlwind of the Almighty to arrest us in temporal captivity and thus release us to both temporal freedom and eternal life. As Judah was ultimately preserved and spiritually delivered from and by her Babylonian captivity, so it is with us. Only by succumbing to the besiegement of God are we to be free.

The masterful John Donne in his Holy Sonnet XIV perfectly captures this Scriptural concept of liberating enslavement to Christ:

*Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town to another due,
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,*

*But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.*

During these forty days of Lenten wilderness (indeed, during every moment of every day), may we, like Donne, tremblingly and fearfully entreat our loving Father to “break, blow, (and) burn” us with His mighty whirlwind. We need his full wind from high places not to fan nor cleanse us (Jeremiah) and not to breathe or shine us (Donne) but to overthrow and enthrall us. We must be broken before whole, destroyed before rebuilt, emptied before filled, helpless before hopeful, and at the end of ourselves before beginning to know God. May we thus, as Jerusalem was begged by Jeremiah, “wash our hearts from wickedness and be saved.”

Doctor Eric Byrd
Seminarian at All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Lent 1 – Ember Friday, March 3

Evening Prayer, First Lesson – Ezekiel 37:1-14

*“And he said unto me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’
And I answered, ‘O Lord God, thou knowest’”
(Ezekiel 37:3).*

The Ember Days are days of solemn supplication for those in the ministry and for all studying for the ministry. All Christians, remembering the particular challenges faced by clergy and seminarians, should offer prayers for their clergy and seminarians. The theme of these days is set forth in the collect of the day, “O ALMIGHTY God, who hast committed to the hands of men the ministry of reconciliation; We humbly beseech thee, by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, to put it into the hearts of many to offer themselves for this ministry; that thereby mankind may be drawn to thy blessed kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” It is customary for all seminarians to write their bishop to report on their progress.

Of course, the work of the church is not limited to the ordained clergy. In all things other than administering the sacraments, all Christians are ministers of the Gospel. As such, the lessons ordained for the Ember Days are worthy of

contemplation by laymen as well as clergy. One lesson which I would especially commend to your consideration is the first lesson of Evening Prayer, the prophecy of the dry bones, found in Ezekiel 37:1-14. Our nation can well be described as having dry bones, spiritually. Even within our own lifetimes, the spiritual condition of our people has undergone a great and lamentable change. Measured by church attendance, one study revealed today less than half of Americans attend church services, compared with nearly three quarters of us in 1937. Not surprisingly, the results of this turning away from the Christian Faith are manifest in our culture. Violent crime, human trafficking, vile entertainment, pornography, suicide, and our hate-filled politics are all symptoms of our nation's dry bones. The hearts of all who love our nation cannot but echo God's question to the prophet "Son of man, can these bones live?"

It is understandable we are tempted to despair of our country, but God is not calling us to despair. There are two things all of us, not just the clergy, can and must do. First and foremost, we must pray for spiritual revival in our land. The prayer "For our Country" (BCP p. 36) is most apt. But, having prayed, God expects more of us.

"...God is not calling us to despair."

As God commanded Ezekiel, we are to "prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones,

hear the word of the Lord.” Not only must we pray, we must speak the word of the Lord to those we know. Debating theology with unbelievers is a waste of your breath and their time but sharing your own experience with Christ is a testimony which no man can deny. Today, consider what testimony, from your own life, you would speak to one who needs to hear the word of the Lord.

Father Nicholas Henderson
Vicar of Saint Patrick’s Mission
Brevard, NC



Lent 1 – Ember Saturday, March 4

Morning Prayer, First Lesson – Ezekiel 34:17-30,
Second Lesson – II Timothy 2: 1-17

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”

(II Timothy 2:13-14)

In the life of the church, today, as well as the preceding Wednesday and Friday, are known as Ember Days. They occur four times in the year; at Advent, Lent, Whitsuntide, and Trinitytide. We are bidden, at these times, to pray especially for those in the ordained ministry of the church, as well as for those that are aspiring to it. It is fitting, then, that this morning we read a portion of St. Paul’s lecture to Timothy.

Paul’s own ministry is constrained because he is under arrest; therefore, he is eager to ensure that the faith and teaching of the gospel continue. He is acting in his two letters to Timothy as the professor, and Timothy is the seminarian. It is obvious that St. Paul has placed a good deal of hope and trust in Timothy, a third-generation Christian. “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing

which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”

These verses are key to understanding this lesson. How may we be sure that the faith preached to us is the authentic teaching of the church from its beginning? Paul reminds Timothy of his responsibility to transmit, as well as to hear the Gospel. Fortunately, we, as Anglicans, have the apostolic succession to maintain and preserve the faith of which St. Paul speaks. Deacons, priests, and bishops cannot function until they have received the laying on of hands by a bishop.

The clergy of tomorrow are the aspirants and seminarians of today. On this Ember Saturday, may we remember them, and those who prepare them, so that the authentic gospel of our Lord might continue to enlighten the world.

*“The clergy of tomorrow are the aspirants
and seminarians of today ... may we
remember them.”*

Deacon Thad Osborne
Holy Cross Anglican Church
Farragut, TN

Lent 2 – Sunday, March 5

Homily for Lent 2

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – Matthew 15:21-28

By Saint John Chrysostom

(*Homily 52 – Anglican Breviary C226-7*)

And the gospel saith “But he answered her not a word.” What is this new and strange thing? To the Jews, in spite of their perversity, Christ seems ever to show great patience; when they blaspheme, He entreateth; when they vex him, He does not dismiss them; but to this Canaanite woman, who had received no instruction in the law or the prophets, and yet was showing such a great reverence, to such and one as this Christ does not vouchsafe so much as an answer! I suppose that even the very disciples must have been affected at the woman’s affliction, so that they were troubled, and out of heart. Nevertheless, not even in their vexation did they venture to say to him: “Grant her this favor.” Rather we read: “His disciples besought Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she crieth after us.’”

But in this connection, let us not forget how we too, when we wish to persuade anyone, do often say the exact contrary of our own wishes. [For thus the disciples could reverently call their Master’s attention to the contrast between His wonted compassion and the strangeness of his behavior toward this woman.]

Then Christ made answer: "I am not sent but on to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And there upon what did this woman do? Was she silent? Did she desist? Did she falter in her earnestness? By no means; rather, she was the more instant. But with us, it is not so; rather, when we fail at once to obtain, we desist; whereas it ought to make us the more urgent. What then saith Christ? Not even with all this was He satisfied, but He seems to make as though to perplex furthermore, saying; "It is not need to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

And thus it was that when He did finally vouch safe to speak to her, He smote her more sharply by His words than by His silence. The more urgent her entreaty, so much the more doth He urge His denial. No longer does He speak of His own people as sheep, for on the contrary He calls them children, and her He calleth a dog! What then saith the woman? Out of his own very words she maketh her plea; for it is as if she said: "Though I be a dog, yet am I not thereby cast out from thee; for along with the children, the dogs are partakers, even though it be in scanty measure, since they eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table. What then saith Christ? "Oh woman, great is thy faith!" Yea, it was for this reason that He had beforehand put her off, namely, that He might crown her as the Woman Great of the Faith!

Lent 2 – Monday, March 6

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – John 10:11-21

“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

Can you close your eyes and visualize a shepherd? All of us, even if we did not grow up on a farm or have not had the opportunity to travel the English countryside, can see in our mind’s eye a shepherd. A vast spread of grass, covering a hilly field like a soft carpet, is dotted with snowy white sheep being guarded by a strapping young man with a staff of wood clutched in his hand. The sheep graze without care, trusting in their shepherd. The shepherd knows each of them and each of the sheep knows him. He will lay down his life for them. In God’s great wisdom, Scripture gives us timeless imagery, making Jesus’ words in St. John’s Gospel flow down through the ages with equal relevance today as on the day He said them.

“I am the good shepherd” is the fourth of seven “I am” statements made by Jesus in St. John’s Gospel. Think for a minute upon Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing.” In the Old Testament, a shepherd was used as an image of God, not only in the Psalms but also by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Jesus calling Himself the Good

Shepherd is a significant statement. So significant, that Christ's words once again sparks division among the Jewish authority. The Pharisees, or "hired hands" as Jesus called them, are not willing to hear the Shepherd's voice. Lent is an excellent time to ask ourselves that very question. Are we hearing the voice of the Shepherd?

“Christ is the Good Shepherd! He will lay down His life for His sheep...”

The Lenten path leads us to the Cross, and it is our faith in the Good Shepherd that guides us every step along the way. For it is on the Cross that the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Scripture imagery, given to us by God, has the power to transform us so that we can hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. It is only by Christ, that the blessing of faith can open our hearts and minds to carry us beyond Good Friday. Peering into Easter morning's empty tomb, we come to fully know the Good Shepherd as the Risen Lord. Christ is the Good Shepherd! He will lay down His life for His sheep and take it up again. For this reason, the Father loves Him. For this reason, we all, as the Psalmist wrote, “may dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Deaconess Cynthia Hensley
All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Lent 2 – Tuesday, March 7

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – John 10:22-38

“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:26-7).

Do we know to whom we belong? We are creatures and that means we have a Creator. The one that made us has made us for a purpose. This then is the true goal, or *telos*, of the Human Person: to discover that for which he or she is made.

Christianity is about deep communion with the God-man and his Body. The Christian Faith can be argued for and rammed down the throats of the unbelievers. But few, if any, are convinced by such methods. At times, deep thinking and profound reflection may lead some to seek Christ. However, in the end, reason will only take a person so far on their journey with the God-man. Often in fact, Christ will seem to abandon his followers, for he wants us to trust him and have an implicit belief in his goodness. Therefore, what Christ

tells the Jews should ring in our own ears: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” Sheep do not have to “figure out” who their shepherd is. No amount of philosophy or sophistry will ever convince a sheep to follow someone who isn’t their shepherd. No, they follow their shepherd because that is what they do. For sheep, to follow the shepherd is part of their *telos*. If anyone ever stopped a sheep and asked them, “why do you follow the shepherd?” the only answer that the sheep could give is: “because that is what I do.”

*“For sheep, to follow their shepherd
is part of their telos.”*

Let us be the sheep to our Great Shepherd. There will always occur times in our lives where we feel alone and that God has left us. Let us continue to follow the Shepherd. He has eternal life, because he is Life. If someone asks you, “why do you follow Christ?” there may be many answers to give them, but one of these should be: “because that is what I do.”

Father Joshua Kimbril
Rector of Saint Matthew’s Anglican Church
Weaverville, NC

Lent 2 – Wednesday, March 8

Morning Prayer – First Lesson – Genesis 28:12-17

*“Behold, I am with you and will keep you
wherever you go...”* (Genesis 28:15).

Jacob’s dream is a part of today’s Old Testament lesson in which he has a dream while on the long journey to his uncle’s home to find a wife. If you have time, close your eyes and put yourself in the dream, asking God to help you visualize the ladder (or stairway) connecting earth and heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. Then, with that picture in mind read out loud the words God spoke to Jacob.

This passage is Good News, indeed! It is of course, Good News for Jacob, soon to be named Israel and the nation of the Jews, but also for us Christians, especially in this time of our Lenten meditations.

In John chapter 1 Jesus connects himself to this very passage, responding to Nathanael’s declaration that Jesus is the Son of God, the King of Israel: “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven

open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

In John chapter 10 Jesus, the “Good Shepherd,” identifies himself as the gate, or door, of heaven: “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved...”

God reiterates to Jacob his promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 that through him and his offspring “all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Even from the beginning God intended to bring us back to Himself and bless us, both Gentile and Jew alike.

“Thanks be to God we have received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Jacob’s response indicates that the key for him going forward is God’s promise “I am with you and will keep you wherever you go...” Thanks be to God we have received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. We too can go forward in the comfort and knowledge that God is with us and will keep us wherever we go!

Scott Eddlemon

Seminarian, Saint Peter the Apostle Anglican Church
Kingsport, TN

Lent 2 – Thursday, March 9

A Gospel Reading from John 5:19-24

“Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do: for what things soever he does, the Son also does likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that He does: and he will show him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises up the dead and quickens them; even so the Son quickens whom he will. For the Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father, which has sent him. Verily, very, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

As we approach Easter, we are reminded of the Godhead. After Jesus cured the man at the pool, the Jews confronted Jesus because He worked a miracle on the Sabbath and He called God “His father.” Today we hear the answer that Jesus gave to defend Himself. He tells us who he is and how he works for and with his Father. Their unity, in and through the Holy Spirit, is the great mystery of the love of God in the unity of the three persons.

Jesus never acted on his own. He only did what the Father indicated for him to do. This is partly why He could say that “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30). In addition, the Creator has handed over all judgement to his Son. This means that the words that Jesus speaks, judge us. We need to listen to them, accept them deeply and live by them. They show us how good or how insensitive and erring we are.

St. Ignatius Loyola used to say that “My Father is still working, and I also am working,” that the Lord is ever laboring on our behalf: an unexpected outcome of his love, providence, and sovereignty – that you are at the right place at the right time, and that Jesus continually prays for us in the unity of the Father and Holy Spirit.

Jesus’ relationship to God was threatening to those who saw God differently. He spoke of God as a loving Father with whom He related closely and confidently. I think of the human relationships that have helped me to understand what Jesus meant. I relax in the presence of God, my heavenly Father, who loves me deeply. God is with us (Emmanuel).

Father Ted Leenerts

Assisting at Holy Cross Anglican Church

Farragut, TN

Lent 2 – Friday, March 10

Psalms from Morning Prayer (95, 54, 61)

*“An offering of a free heart will I give thee, and praise thy Name, O Lord; * because it is so comfortable”*
(Psalm 54:6).

The lectionary blesses us this morning with three psalms at the office. The first should be familiar to us all, being the way every day begins. In the English and other national Books of Common Prayer, the ninety-fifth psalm leads off mattins, or morning prayer. The revisers of the American prayerbook, however, in 1786 didn't care for the way Psalm 95 ends, so they dropped some verses and added others from other, similar psalms to produce the canticle we call the Venite.

Some may deplore what they've called “fiddling” with the inspired Word of God, but it cannot be denied that the tone this canticle sets for the day is a positive expression of both worship of the Almighty and trust in his care. Today, however, we hear the *Venite*, and immediately follow with the unaltered psalm. The eighth verse, the first omitted from the canticle, begins with a plea to the worshipper that we hear God's voice and harden not our hearts.

It is all too easy for us to hear the voice of God and either brush it off or, in the words of the psalm, harden

our hearts not to follow the still, small voice. Yes, it is important to have a positive tone to our worship, but the prayer of the Church on this day reminds us to take care.

However, in the fifty-fourth psalm, we hear a quite different voice, one that pleads to God for salvation from the enemies of our souls. The sixth verse gives us a change in tone, one that could be misinterpreted as extending to God a deal, even though we know God doesn't deal in quid pro quos.

We praise his "Name," as the psalm says, and the psalm is printed in such a way to let us know that where in English it says "Lord," in the original it is the Holy Name of God, a Name so holy that Israel wouldn't even pronounce it. God's Name is indeed "comfortable," as the psalmist says, but we must remember that in the same way the word is used in the Mass in the BCP (p. 76), "comfortable" in the days of the translation meant not providing feelings of ease but rather strengthening. Indeed, the Lord's Name is comfortable, or strengthening, when we face trials and tribulations in our Christian life.

Father Richard Bugyi-Sutter

Assisting at Saint George the Martyr Anglican Church
Simpsonville, SC

Lent 2 – Saturday, March 11

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – John 11:45-57

Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not
(St. John 11:49, 50).

It is always expedient for the sinners to rid the world of Jesus Christ. Caiaphas and his kind had no time for the Son of God long ago and our world has little time for Him today. The Son of God interrupts *the business of America* which *is just business*. And well beyond our borders, he challenges every economic, political, and social system the world will ever know. The problem is that everything, actually, belongs to Him. Since it is His, He would have us use it or not use it, as the case may be, in His service. If we choose not to acknowledge His ownership of all things, including ourselves, then we shall reap what we have sown.

Of course, our reference from today's Evening Prayer New Testament Lesson reveals that Jesus of Nazareth is a threat to the property or proprieties of the Scribes and Pharisees. He was trespassing on the sacred ground which they believed had been entrusted to them. He threatened their power and their property. That they had neither, they would learn soon enough.

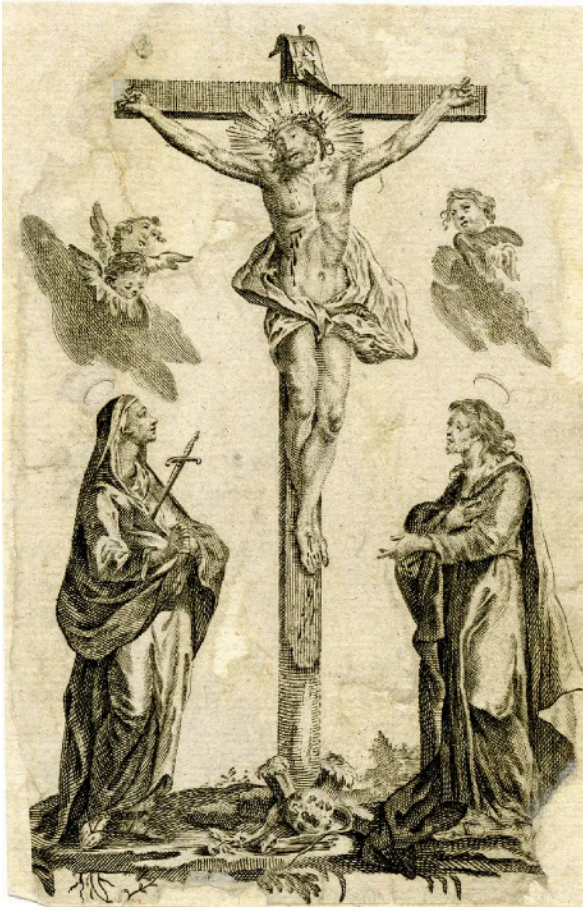
To this point, and to our own peril, we forget that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves (Collect, Lent II). Christ ought not to be threat to our power unless we imagine vainly that we have any. Nor ought Christ to be a threat to our property since possessions are relative, transitory, and ultimately meaningless. Have you ever seen a Brinks truck following a funeral procession?

The problem with Jesus Christ is that He intends to rid us of everything but Himself. And then, to make matters even worse, He intends to rid us even of Himself since He only and ever intends to give us what He receives from the Father. He seems quite intent on a process of unselfing so that the Father's Will and Way might once again rule and govern the hearts of men. Christ, for certain, was a threat to the Scribes and Pharisees of old. Christ, for sure, is a threat to us. Why, if we allowed Him to possess us absolutely with the eternal power that He receives from the Father, we might actually have a shot at Heaven.

If we wish to go to Heaven, we might want to consider allowing this Eternally-Begotten *Word made flesh* to reclaim His rightful possession of all we are and all we have. Caiaphas was correct. It was indeed *expedient that one man should die for the people (Idem)*. Christ's death alone makes atonement for all sin in every age. Christ dies the one death to sin as only He could do. He rids us of Himself in all of his earthly particularity so that He might come alive in all men at

all times. He possesses us in His death with all the power of the Father. He has repossessed us on the Cross of His Love that we might share in His victory over our sins. If we are not threatened by the power and possession that He receives from the Father, we can belong to Him once again.

Father William Martin
Rector of Saint Michael and All Angels Church
Arden, NC



Lent 3 – Sunday, March 12

Homily for Lent 3

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – Luke 11:14-28

by The Venerable Bede

(Anglican Breviary C239-230)

Matthew saith that the devil, by which this poor creature was possessed, was not only dumb, but also blind; and that, when the possessed was healed by the Lord, he both saw and spake. Three miracles, therefore, were performed on this one man; the blind saw, the dumb spake, and the possessed was freed from the devil.

This mighty work was then done in the flesh, but is now fulfilled spiritually every time men are converted and become believers. For from them the devil is cast out, and their eyes are given to see the light of the Faith, and their lips, which before were dumb, are opened that their mouth may shew forth the praise of God. But some of them said: He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. It was not some of the multitude that uttered this slander, but Pharisees and scribes, as we are told by the other Evangelists.

The multitude, which was made up of such as had little instruction, was filled with wonder at the works

of the Lord. But the Pharisees and scribes, on the other hand, denied the facts when they could; and when they could not, they twisted them by an evil interpretation, and asserted that the works of God were the works of an unclean spirit. And Matthew saith: Others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. It would seem that they desired him to do some such thing as Elias did, who called down fire from heaven; or like as Samuel, who caused thunder to roll, and lightning to flash, and rain to fall at midsummer: as though they could not have explained away these signs also, as being the natural result of some unusual, albeit hitherto unremarked, state of the atmosphere. O thou who stubbornly deniest that which thine eye seeth, thine hand holdeth, and thy sense perceiveth, what wilt thou say to a sign from heaven? Verily, thou wilt say that divers signs from heaven were once also wrought even by the sorcerers in Egypt.

But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to a desolation, and an house divided against an house falleth. Thus did he make answer, not to their words, but to their thoughts, in hopes that they might at least believe in the power of him who seeth the secrets of the heart. But if every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, it followeth that the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which same is to abide in everlasting steadfastness, is not a divided kingdom. Wherefore we hold, without fear of

contradiction, that it never can be brought to desolation by any shock whatsoever. But, saith the Lord, if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because ye say that I cast out devils by Beelzebub. In saying this, he sought to draw from their own mouth a confession that they had chosen for themselves to be part of that devil's kingdom which, if it be divided against itself, cannot stand.



Lent 3 – Monday, March 13

Evening Prayer,- 1st Lesson – Jeremiah 7:1-15

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place” (Jeremiah 7:3).

Jeremiah is commanded by God to stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, which is the temple, and to confront the priest and the people. King Jehoiakim who was reigning at the time had built altars to Baal and Molech and the temple had become a place of pagan worship. Moreover, the people had turned to all sorts of other unholy practices.

Jeremiah tells the priest and people to take warning from the fate of the Israelites who had been carried away into captivity because of their sins. Because the iniquities of Judah are so great, Jeremiah is strangely

commanded by God not to intercede for the people (Jeremiah 3:16).

Jeremiah tells the people that if they convert back to godly ways and depart from the sinful lives they are living, they will be allowed to live in the land given to them and their fathers before them.

“... take warning from the fate of the Israelites who had been carried away into captivity ...”

They must return to the Commandments handed to Moses and their lives and the manners with which they treat their fellow men must convert back to the behavior demanded by their God.

Deacon Louis Linn
All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Lent 3 – Tuesday, March 14

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – Mark 10:32-45

*“And whosoever of you will be the chiefest,
shall be servant of all” (Mark 10:44).*

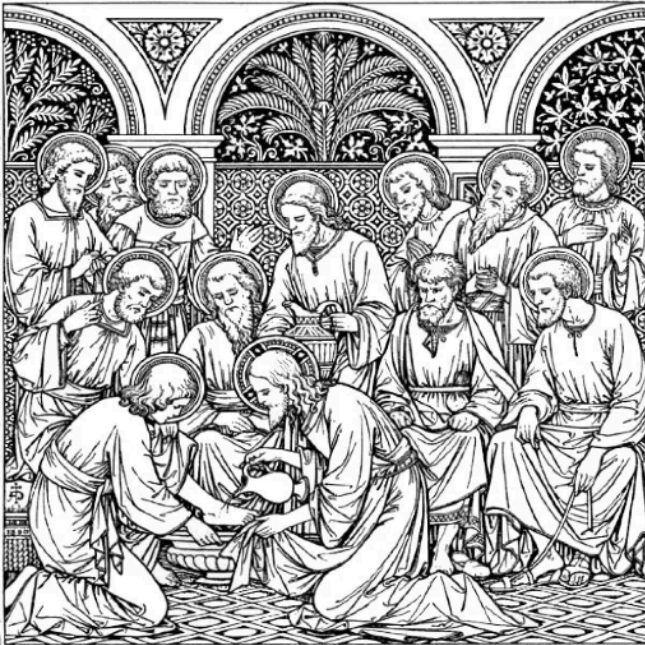
One of the most prominent themes running throughout our Lord’s earthly ministry is that of reversal. Turning things upside down, setting them right again. Loving our enemy instead of hating them. The rich being poor, and the greatest among us being the servants of all.

No one modeled leadership through serving others better than our Lord Himself, who humbled Himself in taking on our humanity and living a life of humility and sacrifice. Ordained ministers of the Church are called publicly to this standard and are the people that our Lord is specifically speaking to in our passage, but don’t think that the laity are freed from this responsibility.

“We are all called to conform ourselves to the life and example of Christ.”

The pyramid of values has been overturned for everyone. We are all called to conform ourselves to the life and example of Christ. We no longer become great through money, power, and prestige. Now, poverty, humility, and servanthood are what makes someone the chiefest among us.

Father Scott Greene
Rector of Holy Cross Anglican Church
Farragut, TN



Lent 3 – Wednesday, March 15

Morning Prayer – Second Lesson
I Corinthians 10:14-22

“I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say”
(I Corinthians 10:15).

As we all know, Lent is a season of preparation. It is a time designed to challenge us to participate more fully in the life of God. That can be seen in all the myriad of scripture lessons appointed for the Daily Offices, as well as the Eucharistic Propers of the season. Today, at Morning Prayer, we read the words of St. Paul to the Church at Corinth, “Flee from idolatry” (I Corinthians 10:14). Now that is a phrase in this morning’s lesson that should make all of us sit up and take note! It is, however, an important component to help us understand how to participate more fully in the life of God.

Simply put, idolatry is the willful insertion of something between us and God, thereby putting that “something” in the place of God. One of the most famous examples of this is the fashioning of the golden calf as the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. We, as Christian people, do not tend to bow and grovel before things like that but we do have our moments that can be eerily similar. Our Lord and Savior recognized that propensity in us when he said, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). Mammon are the

things of this world. And those things that can trap us in serving mammon, in being idolaters, are our standing in the community, business, or church, our relationships, our treasures, such as our homes, our bank and investment accounts, etc.

Paul, in this morning's lesson, using a Eucharistic metaphor, goes so far as to tell us that "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (I Corinthians 10:21). With his typical straightforwardness and intensity, Paul is telling us that if we are not participating the life of God, we are participating in the life of devils. If we put anything before God, we cannot be a part of Him or His Son our Lord Jesus Christ.

While this all may seem rather ominous, Paul exhibits his confidence in his readers, which includes us. He says, "My dearly beloved...I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say" (I Corinthians 10:14-15). Modern translations of scripture render "wise men" as "sensible people." Paul is saying that we should be wise, sensible, and use what we have learned about God, our Savior, our faith, and our life in Him, to properly discern whatever may stand in the way of fully participating in the life of God. And flee from it!

Father Erich Zwingert
Rector of All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Lent 3 – Thursday, March 16

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – Mark 11:12-26

“And Jesus went into the temple and began to cast them out that sold and bought” (Mark 11:15).

The temple in Jerusalem was the physical and spiritual focal point of the Jewish religion. The literal presence of the omnipresent God dwelt in the Holiest of Holies (the innermost sanctum of the temple containing the Ark of the Covenant). Jehovah metaphorically sat on the mercy seat of the Ark between the two surmounted cherubim. Prior to the construction of the temple by King Solomon on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem (some nine centuries before the coming of our Savior), the physical presence of God was represented in the Ark of the Covenant that Moses built with shittim (acacia) wood while on Mount Sinai in the presence of God. During the nomadic wanderings of the Hebrews, the tent-like Tabernacle housed the Ark and served as the portable temple of Judaism.

The temple in Jerusalem was also one of the several focal points of Christ’s ministry. It seems that He was more often in the synagogues or the countryside convening with the people, healing the sick, and teaching the multitudes. However, multiple passages

detail His trips to the temple during which He frequently taught the people in rabbinic fashion and healed them like the prophesied Messiah. In one of the few Scriptural references to the child Jesus which also contains His earliest recorded quotation, Mary and Joseph found the 12-year-old Jesus “in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions” and astonishing his listeners with His “understanding and answers.” When questioned with maternal concern by Mary, Jesus replied “How is it that you sought me? Know ye not that I must be about my father’s business?.” Scripture also seems to indicate that Jesus sought solace and repose in the temple and describes Him walking apparently alone in the portico of Solomon during the winter time Feast of Booths (later known as Hanukkah).

Our passage for this evening once again finds the paradoxical and prophecy-fulfilling Jesus in the temple and once again (as always) “about (His) Father’s business.” However, this temple encounter gives us a glimpse not of His youthful wisdom and learning but of His physical strength and sternness of will. This same, self-described “meek and lowly” (Matt 12:29) Jesus who, with “His face set like flint” (Isaiah), had just ridden into Jerusalem humbly mounted upon the borrowed foal of a donkey (Zechariah) saw that God’s “house of prayer for all people” (Isaiah) had become a “den of robbers” (Jeremiah). This same Jesus who “gave His back to those who struck Him...yet did not

open His mouth” (Isaiah) was consumed by the “zeal of the Lord” (Psalms) and exhibited the quiet strength of His unsurpassed meekness by cleansing the Court of the Gentiles and physically upheaving the desecrators’ tables and wares and driving them off temple property.

A focal point for us during our Lenten observation is the cleansing of another temple of God, that is, ourselves and our own hearts. At least twice in Scripture, both in St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, we are specifically identified, and thus admonished, as temples of God. And such we are, for we are filled with the Holy Ghost and are vessels, like the Ark of the Covenant and the Holiest of Holies, for *Shekinah* glory.

“A focal point for us during our Lenten observation is the cleansing of another temple of God, that is, ourselves and our own hearts.”

During this season in our Lenten wilderness, may we allow Christ to cleanse the temple of our body and soul. Through the practice of temperance and abstinence and through Lenten acts of omission and commission, may we purify our souls, surrender more and more to the Spirit of God, and allow Him complete possession of our hearts. Like our example Christ, may we set our face like flint to do the will of God. May zeal

for the Lord and His house consume us. May we be “meek and lowly,” keep silent when we should, rebut evil vocally and physically when needed, and say with the Savior in Gethsemane’s garden “yet not My will, but Thine, be done.”

Doctor Eric Byrd
Seminararian at All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC



Lent 3 – St. Patrick’s – Friday, March 17

“For we were gentle among you, as a nurse cherisheth her children; so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us”
(I Thessalonians 2:7-8).

The island of Ireland has been Christian, at least in name, for so long, that it can dispute among itself the forms of Christian confession. But in the fifth century AD, Ireland was as pagan as any city-state or empire in the ancient world. The neighbouring island of Britain had received the Christian faith during Roman occupation. In what is now Scotland, Patrick was born around 389, and was kidnapped at the age of six years by Irish pirates and sold as a slave. He served as a shepherd until he was twenty-one, when he made a miraculous escape to Gaul. Consecrated bishop at the age of forty-five, he determined to return to Ireland to preach the gospel.

Ireland was not known to be friendly to Christianity. An earlier missionary, Palladius, had been unsuccessful in his efforts. But Patrick persisted; he preached to and converted the rulers and leading figures, whom we would today call “influencers,” through whose example the Irish people would accept the gospel.

Much of what we know about Patrick is legendary; but behind much legend, there is some truth. It is a fact that he has been much esteemed and venerated for centuries. Many people who claim Irish heritage celebrate his feast day, albeit with mostly secular traditions, like corned beef and green beer. This is especially true in North America.

Today, the western world, including Ireland, is becoming subject to a new paganism: not the idolatry of the past, but a disregard and rejection of the sacred in favour of secularism which would dismay early Celtic saints such as Patrick, Columba, Aidan, and Boniface, who, at great risk to themselves, took the gospel message to heathen lands.

If we claim Irish heritage, we may owe our Christian faith to the work of St. Patrick. If we are proud of our Irish heritage, let us also proudly claim our superior heritage, that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“Almighty God, who, in thy Providence, didst choose thy servant Patrick to be the apostle of the Irish people, to bring those who were wandering in darkness and error to the true light and knowledge of thee: Grant us so to walk in that light, that we may come at last to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

Deacon Thad Osborne
Holy Cross Anglican Church
Farragut, TN

Lent 3 – Saturday, March 18

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – Mark 12:13-17

“... Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar’s. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marvelled at him” (Mark 12:15-17).

This third Saturday of Lent, Jesus is approached by people with deceit in their hearts and is asked a question designed to trap Him in His own words.

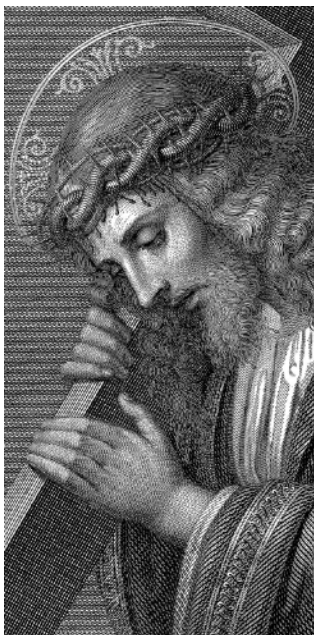
Knowing their hearts, He asked, “Why do ye tempt Me?” and points out their hypocrisy. He points out their sin of pretentious religiosity. He knows they are as two-faced as the coin they gave him.

Though the question seems to be about whether we ought to pay taxes or not, Jesus reminds them the coin is not ultimately theirs. It belongs to the one whose image is on it.

“Are we likewise hypocrites? Is our reflection of Christ on the outside the same on the inside?”

Whose image is upon us? Are we giving God all that belongs to Him or do we think we can fool the One to whom “all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid?” Are we likewise hypocrites? Is our reflection of Christ on the outside the same on the inside? If not, Jesus will point out our hypocrisy.

Deacon Robert Shoup
Saint Patrick’s Mission
Brevard, NC



Lent 4 – Sunday, March 19

Homily for Lent 4

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – John 6:1-14

by Saint Augustine of Hippo

(*Tractate 24 on John*, Anglican Breviary C253-4)

The miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ were verily divine works, and they stir up the mind of man to rise by a perception of what is seen by the eye unto an apprehension of God himself. For God is of such substance as eye cannot see, and the many miracles which He doth work in his continual rule of the whole universe, and in his providential care of everything which he has made, are by use become so common that scarce anyone permitteth himself to perceive the same, as for example, what wondrous and amazing works of God there be in every grain of seed. Wherefore His mercy hath constrained Him to keep some works to be done only at some convenient time, as it were, out of the common course and order of nature, to the intent that men may see them and wonder, not because they be greater, but because they be rarer, than those which they so lightly esteem by reason of their daily occurrence.

For to govern the whole universe is surely a greater miracle than to satisfy five thousand men with five loaves of bread. At the former works no man doth marvel, yet at the feeding of the five thousand, all men

do marvel, not because it is a greater miracle than the other, but because it is a rarer one. For who is He that now feed it the whole world? Is it not that same who, from a little grain that is sown, maketh the fulness of the harvest? God worketh in both cases in one and the same manner. He that over the sowing maketh to come the harvest, is the same that took in His hands five barley loaves, and of them made bread to feed five thousand men. For the hands of Christ have the power to do both the one and the other. He that multiplieth the grains of corn is the same that multiplied the loaves, save only that in this latter case He committed them not into the earth whereof He is Himself the maker.

Therefore this miracle is done outwardly before us, that our souls inwardly may thereby be quickened. The same is shown to our eyes to furnish food for thought. Thus by means of those of his works which are seen, we may come to feel awe toward Him that cannot be seen. Perchance we may thereby be roused up to believe, and if we attain unto belief, we shall be purified to such a good purpose that we shall begin to long to see him. Wherefore, in such wise, through the things which are seen, we may come to know Him that cannot be seen. Yet it suffices not if we perceive only this one meaning in Christ's miracles. Rather let us ask of the miracles themselves what they have to tell us concerning Christ; for in all truth they speak with a tongue of their own, if only we have goodwill to understand the same. For Christ is the Word of God, and each and every work of the Word speaketh a word to us.

Lent 4 – Monday, March 20

Morning Prayer, Second Lesson – I Corinthians 12:12-31a

“For the body is not one member, but many”
(I Corinthians 12:14).

The long and winding path of Lenten disciplines and inward examination reminds us daily of the true significance of our individual relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ. Around the world, fellow Christians are navigating the same slippery stones of adhering to their adopted disciplines for Lent and crossing the familiar treacherous waters of acknowledging and confronting our sins. But the journey itself can, at times, feel rather solitary.

It might be easy to forget that our lives as the faithful in Christ are not a lone endeavor. First, as Christians, we are never absent from the Lord. Secondly, if you are a Christian, then you must be a member of a church, the Body of Christ. The latter is often the subject of much debate in today’s differing Christian circles. But St. Paul makes clear in our reading this morning that a life lived following Christ means belonging to a community of believers. “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” What beautiful language! St. Paul gives us an almost idyllic vision of what a community of believers would look like if an outsider were to witness our life together as a faith

family. The reality is somewhat less picturesque, however, because the local parish is inhabited by mankind – God’s fallen creation. The very reason we can learn a great deal in this passage from 1 Corinthians, and most especially during Lent.

Since Ash Wednesday, most of us have tried in earnest to mark all the boxes – praying the daily offices, no meat on Wednesdays and Fridays, possibly taking up something new like volunteering at the local food bank. Today, however, we are encouraged to meditate upon our role as a member of Christ’s Body.

Take time today to read the beginning of chapter 12 in I Corinthians. St. Paul speaks of the variety and unity of spiritual gifts. The workings of those gifts are different, but all are forms of service to the same God. All of us, no matter our age, financial status, education, physical ability, etc., has a different role, a ministry. Furthermore, the differing ministries of each individual member are vital to the overall health of the whole. God loves all of us. He sees us each as a valuable instrument to advance His Kingdom. We, each of us, have been graciously blessed with the spiritual gifts to do the work the Lord has called us to do. “...You are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

Deaconess Cynthia Hensley
All Saint Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Lent 4 – Tuesday, March 21

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – Jeremiah 14:1-10

“O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name’s sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee” (Jeremiah 14:7).

In Lent, we are called to fasting and to actions of penance. The Church knows that her children need this season, for we must bear in mind that it is God who has saved us even after we had gone far astray. In the Middle Ages, the Western Church developed a phrase, *memento mori*. This means roughly, “remember that you die.” The idea was that the Christian must recall that he or she would die and then face the Judge and Maker of all. In remembering such a thing in their present circumstances, the Christian would try to live in anticipation of this destiny.

In the book of the Prophet Jeremiah, the people of Israel are called to return to God. However, it is only by reminding them that they have gone astray that the prophet can make them aware of their situation. In truth, the basis of all God’s punishment and wrath upon His people is ultimately for their correction. God doesn’t need to avenge his own sense of pride or righteousness. Rather, we need to be reminded that God has created us for Himself, and that when we go astray from God, we are turning our own selves to

destruction and emptiness. Rather than let us go down into destruction, our God chastens us, so that we might turn and be saved.

“Rather than let us go down into destruction, our God chastens us, so that we might return and be saved.”

It is we, God’s creatures, that “have loved to wander.” As Jeremiah says, we “have not refrained [our] feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept [us]; he will now remember [our] iniquity, and visit [our] sins.” However, God only chastises us so that we will cease wandering and that we will refrain our feet from paths of sin. God remembers our iniquity so that we can have the opportunity of purging away the dross in our lives. God visits punishment on our sins so that we can have the opportunity of repenting and asking forgiveness of Him.

During Lent, as we fast and mortify the Flesh and our passions, we should know that we are not punishing ourselves to pay off a debt, but rather we are disciplining ourselves so that we can fulfill our true calling to be God’s holy people.

Father Joshua Kimbril
Rector of Saint Matthew’s Anglican Church
Weaverville, NC

Lent 4 – Wednesday, March 22

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – Mark 12:38-44

“... this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury...” (Mark 12:43).

Jesus was teaching about hypocrisy and making a point to all who were listening, specifically about the problem with clergy. They love to go about in “long clothing,” and give special salutations, taking chief seats in the places of worship, and gladly sitting in the seats of honor wherever a banquet or a reception is held. At this point in this evening’s second lesson, I tend to get a little nervously introspective. I cannot help but notice that every Sunday I read the gospel out for all to hear while standing in the center of the congregation in my very long cassock and alb, just before I return to my special seat within the altar rail not long before I pray some very long prayers and then stand at the back of the church giving a special handshake to every parishioner as they depart for the parish hall where often a special plate of goodies has been prepared just for me. Uh oh.

On closer reading of Jesus’ words however, the problem is not those behaviors in particular. Rather, the problem is the spirit in which they are done. A man who wishes to make himself feel big in this world will often behave in grandiose ways, often making a

show of his benevolence, making sure to be seen in the marketplace, turning his prayers into pretense. In short, his appearances may serve only to cover over a heart that would not think twice about taking advantage of “widow’s houses” or any vulnerable person for that matter.

Illustrating both the problem and the solution for a haughty heart, Jesus used simple mathematics. Within view of those He spoke to, there was a poor widow who gave two mites into the synagogue treasury. Jesus essentially said, “Two mites was 100% of what this woman had had. One who reaches into their storehouse and gives 100 times more than the widow, may in the end be giving far less. Many wealthy folks struggle mightily in their hearts to tithe ten percent of their income, but this poor woman has given everything.” Now we must recognize that in the context, Jesus is not speaking about finances. His “mathematics” apply to the previous discussion about the haughty heart. And so, using the mathematics of almsgiving, Jesus leaves us all with a question this Lent. “How much of yourself have you given to God? Are you withholding? Are you outwardly making a good show of piety, but inwardly you are a stingy miser?”

The problem of the heart is not so simple as to be handled by putting away vestments. It is not adequately addressed by avoiding special greetings or even by giving great sums of money to the Church.

Such measures may well exacerbate the problem by providing a whole new show of false humility. The point is to recognize that the widow was an example of Christlikeness. She lowered herself to the form of a servant and she gave all that she had. Whatever that looks like for you this Lent, now is the time to ask the Holy Spirit for the strength to get to work.

Father Paul Rivard
Rector of Saint George the Martyr Anglican Church
Simpsonville, SC



Lent 4 – Thursday, March 23

Morning Prayer, Second Lesson – I Corinthians 14:13-25

“Brethren, be not children in understanding ... but in understanding be men” (I Corinthians 14:20).

We are now at the fourth week into our Lenten journey! It is a good time to assess whatever special discipline we have taken on for these forty days. Are we maintaining it? Is that obligation becoming easier, or more difficult?

In our second lesson at Morning Prayer today, St. Paul inspires another question: are we using our Lenten exercise, as well as all spiritual gifts, for the right reason? Is it possible that they might be mis-used?

The church in Corinth had some very brilliant and talented people, as might be expected in a large, cosmopolitan city. Many would be Gentiles, people with no Jewish background. Today’s selection addresses specifically the gift of tongues (languages). Apparently some in the Corinthian church have been speaking in foreign languages to people who had no understanding of them. They spoke not to edify their hearers, but to advertise their ability with these languages.

The world’s diverse languages are part of God’s plan. We remember from the book of Genesis that the confusion of languages was a result of the vain ambition of men to build

a tower to heaven, to make it difficult for the human race to co-operate on such ventures in the future. But shortly after our Lord's resurrection, on the feast of Pentecost, the apostles began to preach to the various nationalities in Jerusalem in their own languages, to the end that they should hear in their native languages the wonderful works of God. The confusion of Babel was being reversed!

The characters of whom St. Paul speaks this morning are, basically, speaking to deaf ears. Their gift of languages is wonderful, but it is not edifying the church. They are trying to rebuild Babel, which is contrary to God's will, as demonstrated at Pentecost! As we remember from the previous XIII chapter of this epistle, the gifts of wealth, almsgiving, even martyrdom, can be misused.

“...the gifts of wealth, almsgiving, even martyrdom, can be misused....Are we edifying the Church by what we are doing?”

So, in our Lenten discipline, let us be careful to avoid the danger in self-glory. Are we edifying the church by what we are doing? Are we spreading the Gospel, or obscuring it? At the very best, our Lenten fast or discipline should be private, except for occasions of corporate devotion. We are moving onward toward Easter. May we persevere in our journey.

Deacon Thad Osborne
Holy Cross Anglican Church
Farragut, TN

Lent 4 – Friday, March 24

Evening Prayer, First Lesson – Jeremiah 16:5-13

“And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me” (Jeremiah 16:12).

One of the most difficult concepts for us, as Americans, to deal with is the notion of corporate responsibility. As Americans, we naturally find it much easier to think of ourselves as being individuals, as opposed to being members of a corporate entity. Part of this doubtless is a left-over from our frontier heritage of “rugged individualism,” and part may have its roots in the Reformation. One obvious danger of this tendency is for us to think of our salvation as being primarily a “me and Jesus” phenomenon, and to minimize the importance of becoming and remaining “members incorporate in the mystical body of Christ.” In the teaching of some Christian sects, if I have once had a particular kind of religious experience, my participation in the Church becomes sort of a nice thing to do, like being a member of the Rotary Club, rather than being literally a matter of (eternal) life and death.

One problem this tendency produces is to make much of Scripture utterly incomprehensible. The prophecies which warn of future punishments, such as the one in our lesson for today, are directed not to specific individuals, but rather to the whole people of Israel. The sin is corporate;

therefore, the prophesied punishment is corporate. This may strike us as “unfair”; since we are used to thinking of ourselves as individuals, we find it difficult to understand corporate guilt. God does deal with us as individuals, but also as members of our society. This means a punishment poured out on our society, or on mankind as whole, will in some measure fall on us, whether we have committed the specific sin being punished, or not. “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).

To begin to understand this, we must understand what being human really means. If we could see mankind from the standpoint of One outside time and space, who sees all times at once (God’s vantage point), humankind would be revealed as one single organism. Individual shoots branch off at conception, and may themselves be the source of other branches, but all terminate in death. We are all part of each other, if only by our common descent from our first parents. The sin of one part affects all; “in Adam all die” (I Corinthians 15:22).

More specifically, as members of our own society, we are all involved in the corporate sins of our society. Whether we have committed a particular sin or not, the punishment which falls on our society will fall on us. We are indeed “our brother’s keepers.” It will do us no good to huddle with the holy and hope for the best. We are responsible not only to avoid sin in our own lives, but we are also responsible to work to change society to eliminate or ameliorate corporate sin. “Not getting involved” is simply not an option; we are involved. As a quote attributed to Edmund Burke puts it, “All that is required for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”

One of the questions upon which we need to reflect this Lent is, therefore, “Am I doing all I can to reform what is amiss in our culture, or am I content to let evil triumph by doing nothing?”

*No man is an island, Entire of itself;
Every man is a piece of the continent, A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less,
As well as if a promontory were:
As well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were.
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind.
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee. – John Donne*

Father Nicholas Henderson
Vicar of Saint Patrick's Mission
Brevard, NC

Lent 4 – Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Saturday, March 25

Holy Communion Gospel Proper - Luke 1:26-38

“And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her” (St. Luke 1:26).

The garden-variety of believer in the contemporary world is wholly earthly-minded. Most *Christians* never get around to discovering that they even have souls since they are so immersed in their bodies and the fear of disease and earthly death. If they are curious about God at all and they are healthy enough, it mostly involves supplications and petitions for economic success and political reform. Earthly-minded men neither make nor take the time to relate to God with humility and reason for transcendent reasons. Earthly-minded men believe in *God in a box* or in that drawer that is opened only when needed. Salvation and its cost never seem to cross their minds since God is a paranormal *other* that figures into human life only when needed in mundane emergencies.

But there have been others throughout history whose characters were more noble. One thinks of the priests, prophets, and kings of the Old Testament. One

thinks today of the Mother of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary. Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation. On this day, we find one human being who was so spiritually minded that she had the intelligence and courage to challenge God's own Archangel, Gabriel.

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be (St. Luke 1:27-29).

That she was not given instinctively to the God of miracles, signs, wonders, magic, or superstition is found in her interrogation of the angel. The Blessed Virgin Mary was thoroughly human. As such, she was sound and serious. She had questions and she wanted answers. She wanted facts and she demanded evidence. If she was to cooperate with a Miracle of the Lord, *to conceive in her womb, bring forth a son, call his name Jesus, who would be the Son of the Highest and of whose kingdom there would be no end (Ibid, 31-33)* she wanted to know *How. How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? (Ibid, 34)*

The Angel informed Mary that *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.* (Ibid, 34) The Blessed Virgin was not looking for earthly comfort, worldly riches, or even the political deliverance of her people from the Romans. In her humility, she was a believer. She was content with all that the Lord had done for her already. She was ripe and ready to receive the Grace of God and to enter His service more deeply as the Mother of God's Son because her faith was strong and she tested the spirit to see if he was of God. *Be it unto me, according to thy word.* (Idem) Mary believed and trusted that Gabriel came from God. She waited and prayed. In the eyes of the world, she was nobody. In the eyes of God, she would become the paradigm, pattern, and model for all Christians. In her womb, *the Word began to be made flesh.* Unlike her ancestor Eve, she trusted and obeyed. Unlike her ancestor Eve, the Blessed Virgin did not desire to be as God, knowing good and evil. She did not envy God but longed to serve Him humbly and simply. She was *full of Grace* because she knew that without God, *she was an empty cistern that could hold no water* (Jeremiah 2:13).

The Blessed Virgin would give birth to *the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us* (St. John 1:14). Because she was *full of Grace*, she would be called to let Him go continuously, to release Him to the nations, to be the Son of God for all and not merely the dearly

beloved Son of her flesh. *A sword would pierce through her soul also* (Luke 2:35). Because she thought first of the things of God and Heaven, because she pondered Her Son's role in our reconciliation with it, she would suffer to let Him go...into His suffering for her salvation and ours.

Father William Martin
Rector of Saint Michael and All Angels Church
Arden, NC



Lent 5 – Passion Sunday, March 26

Homily for Lent 5, commonly called Passion Sunday
Holy Communion Gospel Proper – John 8:46-59
by Gregory the Great
(*Homily 18 on the Gospels*, Anglican Breviary C267-8)

Deearly beloved brethren, consider the gentleness of God. He came to take away sin, and He saith; “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” He, who in virtue of his Godhead was able to justify sinners, did not distain to show by an appeal to reason that He was not Himself a sinner. But verily the words which he addeth are exceeding awesome: He that is of God heareth God’s words; ye, therefore, hear of them not, because we are not of God. Wherefore, if he that is of God, heareth God’s words, and if one who is not of God, is not able to hear God’s words, let each one ask himself: “Do I, in the ear of my heart, hear God’s words, and understand whose words they are?” The Truth commandeth us to long for a fatherland in heaven, to bridle the lust of the flesh, to turn away from the glory of the world, to covet no man’s goods, and to bestow freely of our own.

Let each of you therefore think within himself if this voice of God sound out loud in the ear of his heart; for thereby will he know whether he be of God. Some there be, whom it pleases not to hear the commandments of God, even with their bodily ears.

And some there be, who receive the same with their bodily ears but whose heart is far from them. And some also there be, who hear the words of God with joy, so that they are moved thereby even to tears. But when their fit of weeping is past they turn again to iniquity. They who despise to do the words of God certainly cannot be said to hear them. Wherefore, dearly beloved brethren, call up your own life before your minds eye, and then ponder with trembling those awful words which the mouth of the Truth speak: “Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”

The Truth speaketh these words concerning the reprobate. But the reprobate make manifest the same thing concerning themselves, by their evil deeds. Thus immediately followeth: “Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, ‘Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?’” Hear now what the Lord saith to so great an insult. “I have not a devil.” But He did not say, “I am not a Samaritan.” For in a sense a Samaritan He was indeed, since the word Samaritan is by interpretation a Watcher, and the Lord is that Watcher, of whom the Psalmist saith, that except he keep the city, any other watchman waketh but in vain. He also is that Watchman unto whom crieth Isaiah, “Watchman, what of the night, Watchman, what of the night?” Wherefore the Lord did not say, “I am not a Samaritan” – but, “I have not a devil.” Two charges were brought against Him. One He denied. To the other His silence gave assent.

Lent 5 – Passiontide – Monday, March 27

Morning Prayer – First Lesson – Exodus 3:1-15

“And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5).

Moses, while hunting for good grazing land on Mt. Horeb, saw a burning bush that was not being consumed and he approached it to investigate. He then heard his name shouted twice, in the Bible a sign that the matter is of great importance. The voice of God informed Moses to take off his sandals and come no closer, for he was on holy land. Yahweh’s very presence made the land holy.

God informed Moses that he was the God of his father and also the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses hid his face and was afraid to look at God. His was the fear of the unholy in the very presence of the holy.

It was at this time that God informed Moses that he had seen the terrible affliction of His people and would send Moses to lead them out of that captivity and into the land of “milk and honey.”

Moses expressed his great concern that he would not be able to approach Pharaoh and accomplish God’s work, but God assured Moses that He would be with him and all would be accomplished.

“When we are called to do something in His name, we must stand in His strength, and go forth with confidence.”

When we are in the presence of our holy God, it is right for us to fall to our knees and acknowledge our weakness. When we are called to do something in His name, we must stand in His strength, and go forth with confidence.

Deacon Louis Linn
All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Lent 5 – Passiontide – Tuesday, March 28

Evening Prayer, First Lesson – Jeremiah 22:10-23

“I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear” (Jeremiah 22:21a).

There is a popular saying that goes something like “When you are at rock bottom, the only place to look is up.” When the effects of this broken world come crashing into our lives, whether through our own fault or by circumstances completely out of our control, we can’t help but look up as our only source of help in our time of trouble.

I doubt there are many people that have not experienced this helplessness when things are out of control. God is our only refuge, so we naturally look to and listen to Him. Through this helpless experience we come out the other side closer to our Lord than before the whole ordeal started.

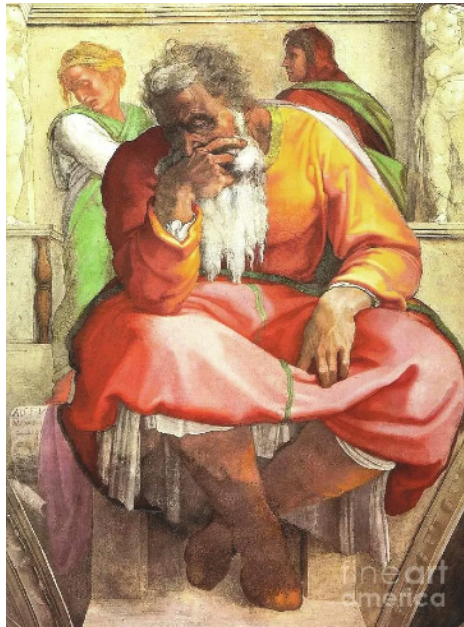
What about when things are going perfectly? Your business is booming and all your needs are met by the fruits of your own hands? No surprises, no hardships, just smooth sailing. We would think that when things are at their best for us, we would be at our best for God. It turns out though, when we feel like we are in

control we often refuse to listen to God. We tell Him that we are doing just fine, thank you very much, we can take it from here.

“When we feel we are in control, we often refuse to listen to God.”

The prophet Jeremiah points out this hypocrisy for his own generation and names it for ours as well. If your life is going well right now, don't forget to look up and remember that we need God in both in hardship and in prosperity.

Father Scott Greene
Rector of Holy Cross Anglican Church
Farragut, TN



Lent 5 – Passiontide – Wednesday, March 29

Morning Prayer – Psalms 128, 129

*“Lo, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.
The Lord from out of Sion shall so bless thee, that thou
shalt see Jerusalem in prosperity all thy life long...”*
(Psalm 128:5-6).

This morning and this evening we pray three of what are called “Psalms of Ascent.” These psalms, with others, were sung as the Jews would ascend to Jerusalem for one of three yearly feasts. It should be easy for us to cast our minds back to Epiphanytide (BCP p. 110) and picture the Holy Family, Jesus with Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, walking up to Jerusalem and the temple. The custom was to sing these psalms of ascent not just on the hike but especially on the steps of the temple.

Re-read Psalm 128 as you picture pilgrims journeying to worship at the temple. Verses five and six remind us that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10), of course, but for Christians the fear of the Lord is not a cowering abasement but the recognition of the right ordering of the universe (we kneel before the Most High not to show terror but to

demonstrate our awareness of his great mercies and love for us). The fear of the Lord is the foundation of all learning. As we go about our day, repeat these verses from Psalm 128, and pray for the Almighty's direction and guidance in his will and his way.

The second Psalm, 129, is usually seen as a description of the sufferings of our Lord in his passion, especially the third verse, where the "plowers have plowed long furrows in my back," an apt image of the thirty-nine lashes our Lord endured. As Lent draws closer to Holy Week, we have entered into Passiontide, the final two weeks of Lent, and it would behoove us all to contemplate the wounds Christ suffered for our sins, and the sins of the whole world. The prayers of the Stations of the Cross draw this clearly for us. There is probably no more striking depiction than the one in the movie "Passion of the Christ," where Jesus falls and the Blessed Virgin rushes to him, and he says, "See, Mother, how I make all things new." May these furrows on our Lord's back make all things new for us as we prepare for the great queen of feasts, Easter.

"...it would behoove us all to contemplate the wounds of Christ suffered for our sins, and the sins of the whole world."

Father Richard Bugyi-Sutter

Assisting at Saint George the Martyr Anglican Church
Simpsonville, SC

Lent 5 – Passiontide – Thursday, March 30

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – John 12:34-43

"We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever...Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light" (John 12:34-35)

The interface between time and eternity has always been and always will be (until “he shall appear, and we shall be like him” 1 John 3:2) a great mystery. The inscrutable essence of eternity itself keeps human comprehension of it mystical and gray. As we currently “see through a glass darkly” (I Cor 13:12), we almost necessarily tend to appraise eternity as simply an unending series of time units. But, definitionally, the conceptual substance of eternity must be something more and different and “other.” For, eternity existed forever before God placed time into it or alongside it.

Our understanding and even experience of time is also, rather oddly, often equally murky. Our conception of time is rooted in the Earth’s revolution about the sun and rotation on its axis (“And the evening and the morning was the first day”) and is

demonstrated by human contrivances such as the sundial and the clock as well as the observation of changes in finite things (such our own bodies!) due to entropy (a truly time-dependent phenomenon).

Humankind was created in time and thus swims in time and has perspective limited by the constraints of time. However, humankind is exceedingly, and superficially inexplicably, uncomfortable with time. How often do we find ourselves saying things such as “Where did the time go?”, “What happened to the time?”, and “How time flies!” In an argument famously made by C.S. Lewis, he observes that the discomfiture of man with time is strong teleological evidence that time-constrained man was made for eternity and truly has “eternity in his heart” (Eccles 3:11). This makes great sense. For, if we were only made for time, we should swim in it without feeling wet. If we only possessed the capacity for time, time should be to us as the air we breathe: taken for granted, completely comfortable, and asphyxiating if absent.

Lewis had a great many insightful things to say about time and eternity and the interface or intersection between these two realities. In a profound passage from *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis says “The Future is, of all things, the thing least like eternity. It is the most temporal part of time – for the Past is frozen and no longer flows, and the Present is all lit up with eternal rays.” Lewis identifies the Present as the ever-present

intersection between time and eternity. The present moment is the eternal now. He says “the Present is the point at which time touches eternity. Of the present moment, and of it only, humans have an experience analogous to the experience (that God) has of reality (as a) of whole; in it alone freedom and actuality are offered to them.”

In this evening’s passage, the Jews, demonstrating an impressive understanding of scriptural prophecy, query Christ about his comment, “the Son of Man must be lifted up.” They could not justify this with the prophecies that proclaimed the eternal kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus capitalized on their concern about the eternity of the Messiah and used it to focus them on their own finite selves and the limited time that they had to interact with the eternal light that had come down from heaven like bread and water to interface with time and them.

Scripture is replete with references exhorting and admonishing us to “walk while we have the light.” Mordecai admonishes Esther with his famous phrase “For such a time as this.” St. Paul in Corinthians quotes Isaiah and says “Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Isaiah urges us to “Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.” The psalmist exhorts us to “pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found.”

Just as the Messiah is eternal and we temporal, God's love for mankind is everlasting, but our opportunities to receive His light are limited. As eternity interfaced with time in the Incarnation of the Messiah, so each "present moment" in our lives is a point at which time touches eternity. May we seize these ever-present present moments and "eternal nows" in timely fashion to eternally draw closer to our ever-present Savior. May we be shriven while He is shriving, listening while He is calling, and opening while He is knocking. May we know Him eternally by knowing Him now. May we, as Christ admonished the Jews, walk while we have the light.

Doctor Eric Byrd
Seminarian at All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Lent 5 – Passiontide – The Compassion of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Friday, March 31

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

Holy Communion Gospel Proper (John 19:25-27)

Today, Friday after Passion Sunday, we remember the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin Mary or “Our Lady of Sorrows,” as she watches her Son, Jesus, being tortured and crucified unjustly. We can only imagine the emotional torture she was going through; a mother never rejects her children, even at death. Mary was there at the most important moments of Jesus’ life, even his brutal tortuous death on the Cross.

Even at the moment of his death, Jesus’ heart is open to those who suffer. Jesus recognizes the grieving of his Mother, Mary, and John and asks them to make space in their lives for one another. What might I learn from Mary and from John as Jesus invites me to live more closely with them? Jesus asked Mary and John to make

room in their lives for new relationships of care; could it be that I sometimes receive the same invitation?

Saint John is the only evangelist to depict Mary at the foot of the Cross. He did this to make the theological point that she has a place of special importance beside the disciple ‘whom Jesus loved’ at the Cross and as a founder of the community of disciples that Jesus was leaving.

“Jesus asked Mary and John to make room in their lives for new relationships of care; could it be that I sometimes receive the same invitation?”

Today’s Gospel reading focuses on the gift that Jesus gives from the Cross – giving his Mother to John, and John to his Mother. This has been interpreted down through the years as John representing us, the Church, as the Body of Christ. This means that Mary is following the same spiritual role of looking after us as she had when she looked after Jesus. It means that Jesus, who gave us the beautiful sacrament of the Eucharist, is seeing us as under the care of his Mother; a spiritual Mother who, much like the saints in heaven, intercedes for us and points to her Son.

Father Ted Leenerts

Assisting at Holy Cross Anglican Church

Farragut, TN

Lent 5 – Passiontide – Saturday, April 1

Evening Prayer, First Lesson – Jeremiah 33 1-9, 14-16

*“In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land”
(Jeremiah 33:15).*

While Jeremiah was being held prisoner, He was called to tell the people what was to come and that this was happening because they had brought it upon themselves for they had repeatedly rejected God. The Lord said; “I have hidden my face from this city because of its wickedness.”

But He does not leave it there. He recalls His promises and says, “... call to Me and I will answer. I will bring health and healing. I will heal my people. I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against Me and will pardon all their iniquities against me. Then they will be to a Me a name of renown, joy, praise, and honor before all nations on earth. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to grow from David and He will execute judgement and righteousness in the land.”

“... if we call to Him, He will forgive our iniquities against Him and restore us ...”

These promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ and He intercedes for us as our great High Priest. As God’s people in Babylon, our hope, righteousness and salvation rest in Him alone. Now, as then, we are inclined to selfishness and prone to idolatry and the corruption of our culture. Now, as then, if we call to Him, He will forgive our iniquities against Him and restore us that we may bring Him joy, praise and honor before all the earth.

Deacon Robert Shoup
Saint Patrick’s Mission
Brevard, NC



Palm Sunday – April 10

Homily for Palm Sunday

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – Matthew 27:1-54

by Saint Leo the Great

(Sermon 2 On the Passion of our Lord

Anglican Breviary C279-80)

Dearly beloved, the solemnity of the Lord's Passion is come; that day which we have so desired, and which same is so precious to the whole world. Shouts of spiritual triumph are ringing, and suffer not that we should be silent. Even though it be hard to preach often on the same solemnity, and do so meetly and well, a priest is not free to shirk the duty of preaching to the faithful concerning this so great mystery of divine mercy. Nay, that his subject matter is unspeakable should in itself make him eloquent, since where enough can never be said, there must needs ever be somewhat to say. Let human weakness then, fall down before the glory of God, and acknowledge itself unequal to the duty of expounding the works of His mercy. Let us toil in thought, let us falter in speech; it is good for us to feel how inadequate is the little we are able to express concerning the majesty of God.

For when the Prophet saith: "Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore," let no man thence conclude that he will ever find all that he seeketh. For

if he cease his seeking, he will likewise cease to draw near. But among all the works of God which weary the steadfast gaze of man's wonder, what is there that doth at once so ravish and so exceed the power of our contemplation as the Passion of the Saviour? He it was who, to loose mankind from the bonds of the death-dealing Fall, spared to bring against the rage of the devil the power of the divine Majesty, and met Him with the weakness of our lowly nature. For if our cruel and haughty enemy could have known the counsel of God's mercy, it had been his task rather to have softened the hearts of the Jews into meekness, than to have inflamed them with unrighteous hatred. Thus he might not have lost the thraldom of all his slaves, by attacking the liberty of the One that owed him nothing.

But he was undone by his own malice. For he brought upon the Son of God that death which is become life to all the sons of man. He shed that innocent blood which was to become at once the price of our redemption and the cup of our salvation. Wherefore the Lord hath received that which according to the purpose of his own good pleasure He hath chosen, He submitted Himself to the ungodly hands of cruel men which, busy with their own sin nonetheless ministered to the Redeemer's work. And such was His loving-kindness, even for His murderers, that His prayer to His Father from the cross asked not vengeance for Himself, but forgiveness for them.

Holy Week – Monday Before Easter, April 3

Morning Prayer – First Lesson – Isaiah 42:1-7

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights” (Isaiah 42:1).

Holy Week in Christ’s Church has arrived. We Christians can now look back on our Lenten journey and see the highs and lows – the triumphs and the pitfalls. Holy Week’s arrival tends to give us hopeful anticipation, as we know Easter is on the horizon. However, before we rejoice in the Resurrection, a grave foreboding looms in our final stretch on our path to the Cross. There can be no Easter without the Passion. If we do not face the harshness of the Cross on Good Friday, we cannot obtain the hope of glory. We are nearing the end, but the final days are the most difficult to traverse. Have you ever put your hands over your eyes during a particularly difficult scene when watching a movie? The music intensifies and your brain tells you, “Don’t look!” It might be tempting to turn away during our Lord’s darkest hour. God, however, encourages us with the reading from Isaiah this morning to stay the course. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights.”

God, who is the author of our salvation, tells us to behold His servant, to look upon Him. How then can we look away? It is easy to give our adoration to the babe in the manger. We shout praises to God on Easter Sunday

outside the empty tomb. But, when beholding our Lord, beaten and bloody on the Cross, trepidation can clench our very core. Many Old Testament figures, Moses, Abraham, and even the nation of Israel were called God's servants. But Christ is superior to all of them because He has come, God Incarnate, to deliver all of creation – Jew and Gentile alike -- into God's saving grace. It is God's victory alone. One that no other servant, even Israel, could accomplish. The Good Friday question is, as the hymn so poignantly asks, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?"

Monday, the start of Holy Week is the day that the music in the drama of our salvation begins to intensify, signaling the climax that is soon to come. The servant of Isaiah does not come to us a warrior king, ready to do battle with the world. Christ, the Son of God, has come as a meek and humble servant of God to save us from death, the penalty of sin – our sin. God tells us to "behold" His servant and therefore we should not look away. As we start this final journey in Lent, we must prepare ourselves to stay the course. Will we be like so many of Jesus' disciples who were absent at the foot of the cross on Good Friday? Or will we gather the courage to gaze upon the cross and behold Him? For it is He, who will release us from the prison of darkness. It is He, who is the light of all nations. It is He, who God upholds and has chosen. Jesus Christ, our Savior, is in whom God delights.

Deaconess Cynthia Hensley
All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Holy Week – Tuesday Before Easter, April 4

Morning Prayer, Second Lesson – John 15:1-16

“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” (John 15:13-16).

In this passage of Scripture, Our Lord lays down the great law of love for his disciples. In his later epistles, St. John, author of the Gospel, will tell us explicitly that God is love. There are many words that he could have used to describe God: Almighty, Wise, Just, Holy, and All-knowing. Yet, he chose to tell us that God is love. The reason for that is the teaching comes straight from the mouth of Our Lord. The greatest demonstration of who God is and what makes up his character is found on the Cross. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is, literally, love personified.

Now, if God demonstrates himself for us on the cross, it is because he loves us and desires us as a Husband desires his Wife, or as a person desires their closest companion. Christ is our lover, and our friend. He tells his disciple that they are friends and not servants. In the Christian Faith, we believe that we are God's family, his kinfolk. Other religions make us slaves or vassals of God, and some religions turn us into God. It is the Christian Faith that tells us that we are creatures of God, but dearly beloved creatures. We are the creatures that God pines for, that he dies for. If this is who God is, then our only response can be a return of that love. As imperfect as our love is, God still wants it for himself.

“We are the creatures that God pines for, that He dies for.”

If God loves us and wants our love, we demonstrate the return of our love to God through our obedience. The law of faith and grace given in the new Covenant doesn't contradict obedience and action on our part. Rather, it is through our works and actions that we make our love to God real and effective. Indeed, we are told that we have been chosen to bear fruit for God. Therefore, our love of God is made manifest in our deeds. This Lent, let us remember that obedience to Christ and his law is our fulfillment of our love to God. In Lent, we willingly give up many things to draw closer to God, but it is imperative to remember that the

goal of fasting is union with God. We obey God not because obedience in itself is the highest good. Rather, it is the love for God that is demonstrated in the obedience that is the goal of all our actions and deeds in service to Christ.

Father Joshua Kimbril
Saint Matthew's Anglican Church
Weaverville, NC



Holy Week – Wednesday Before Easter, April 5

Morning Prayer, First Lesson – Zechariah 12:9-10 &
13:1, 7-9

*“... and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,
and they shall mourn for him ...” (Zechariah 12:10).*

The first lesson read for Morning Prayer today is a difficult one for several reasons. First, the context for the events described is not entirely clear. Second, it seems that in the latter portion (of a chopped up reading), it is God Himself who plans to “smite the shepherd,” “scatter the sheep,” and turn His hand upon the “little ones.” With difficulty, these can be explained, especially when it is considered that it was false prophets and shepherds who were incurring wrath, and those who followed their lies that would see the back of God’s hand. But our confusion at understanding Zechariah’s ancient message is likely nothing compared to the confusion of Zechariah’s audience who would read what could only make sense to the followers of Christ centuries later.

Zechariah speaks the words of the Lord saying, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication: and they shall look upon me whom they

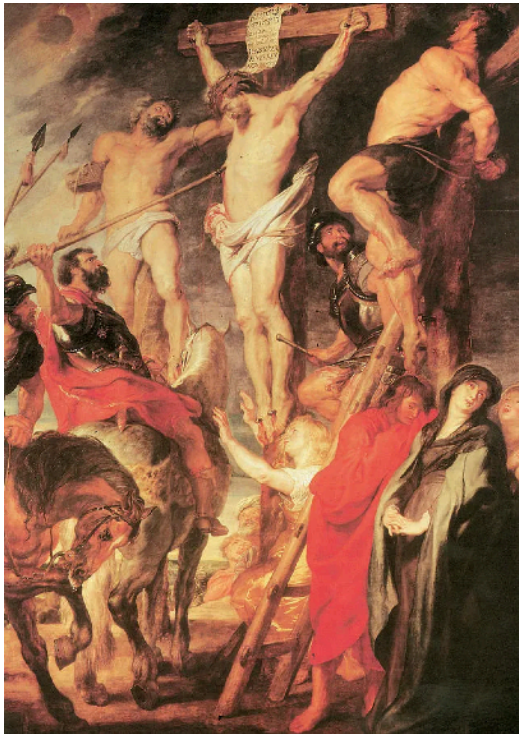
have pierced, and they shall mourn for him ...” (Zechariah 12:10). There is no doubt that the people of God were deserving of judgment in the time of the prophet Zechariah, but I am not sure that they would have known specifically what the prophet meant about someone who had been pierced who every one looked upon and mourned for “as for their first born” (v. 10). I guess they would have skipped over that verse with silent perplexity.

On closer examination of the words that are said in the name of God, we hear God say “they shall look upon ME whom they have pierced.” Zechariah declares that God has somehow – whether literally, metaphorically, anthropomorphically, spiritually or otherwise – been pierced. And within the same sentence, the first person “me” changes to the third person – “they shall mourn for HIM.” The wording is befuddling for the reader until Christ, of one substance with the Father, is crucified on the cross. God was pierced by the spear of the Roman soldier. In truth, the Shepherd was smitten by the sheep. Rather than cheer, the sheep looked upon him who was pierced and mourned as for their first born. Humanity mourned for having slain our own progenitor, our own brother, our own pattern and our own salvation.

Zechariah’s readers must have been confused, but let us not be confused. It was on that day that God was pierced, when He would also “pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the

spirit of grace and of supplication.” At this final holy week of Lent, when we approach the deepest sorrows of Good Friday and recall again how we have so often smitten God in our ignorance, rebellion, and shameful stupidity, that He has poured out upon us in return His divine life, His grace. Now that the prophecy has been fulfilled, there must be no confusion about that.

Father Paul Rivard
Rector of Saint George the Martyr Anglican Church
Simpsonville, SC



Holy Week – Maundy Thursday, April 6

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – John 17

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21).

John 17 is a unique passage of Scripture. It is the climax of John’s account of the “rest of the story” about the Last Supper. It is perhaps surprising the Gospel according to Saint John gives us no account of the supper itself, John being accounted as the most Sacramental of the Gospels. We can infer from this John, being satisfied with the accounts of Paul and the Synoptic writers of the Institution of the Lord’s Supper, finds no need to recapitulate their accounts, but proceeds to give us the other events he felt were important, which they left out. John 13 gives us the Washing of the Disciples’ Feet. Chapters 14-16 gives us Jesus’ preparation of the disciples for his impending death. Finally, John 17 is what is called the “Great High Priestly Prayer,” after which they depart for the garden and what follows.

The “Great High Priestly Prayer” is the longest account we have of any of Jesus’ prayers. As such it is infinitely precious to us. The prayer consists of three

parts. In the first part, Jesus consecrates his coming sacrifice. In the second, he prays for the Apostles and their future mission. In the last part, from which our verse is taken, he prays for the Apostolic Church, “them also which shall believe on me through their word.” His prayer for the Church is explicit. “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” He prays for the unity of the Church. The Church is to be as one, even as He and His Father are one. He goes further and gives the reason for this petition, “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

The visible unity of the Church is to be a witness to our Lord’s divinity. A moment’s reflection will show the reasonableness of this. As the Church is the Body of Christ, what men see of Her reflects on Christ. If the Church is united in love and in a common witness to Christ, this most surely validates Her witness. If, on the other hand, the Church is perceived by men as a myriad of squabbling little sects, each preaching and teaching diverse and often contradictory things, and more united in mutual hatred than in love, what does that say of Her Lord? Men could be forgiven for thinking the Master of such cacophony is not only not divine, but not even sane. The disunity of the Church most surely vitiates Her witness.

The challenge for us, this Lent, is to consider what we can do to set forward Christ’s will for His Church. The first and most obvious thing is to abhor the

current state of the Church. The consumerist idea the almost infinite variety of doctrines and worship offered by the Church today is a “good thing,” since everybody can find a church where he or she can be “comfortable,” is a truly hell-spawned notion. The Church is not supposed to make us comfortable; She is supposed to make us like Christ. The old saying is a good one, “If you want to worship God in your own way, okay, but I would rather try to worship Him in His.” What we should all desire is a restoration of the visible unity of the Body of Christ.

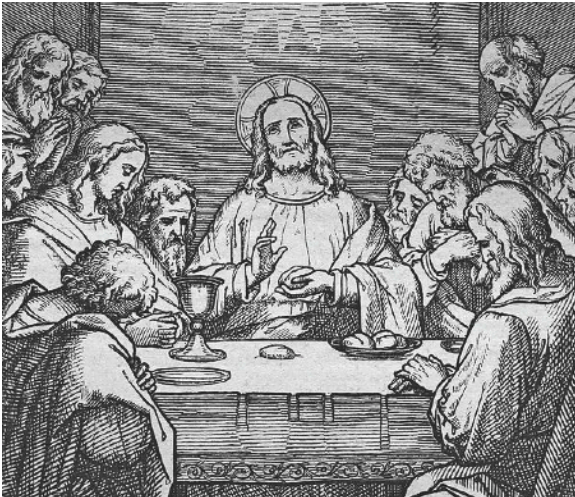
The second thing is to rejoice in, and support in thought, word, and deed the efforts of our Jurisdiction and others to work towards unity within the Continuing Church. But finally, we must search our own hearts and minds to discover our attitudes towards other Christian groups. At present, there are clearly some things in which we must disagree with other Christian groups who have departed from the Apostolic Faith, either by denying parts of the Faith, or by adding things which were not part of the Faith of the Undivided Church and demanding others submit to them. Our response should be loving forbearance and discussion, not acquiescence. Of course, we must equally be sure we are not demanding things of others which were not a part of that Apostolic Faith, either.

Finally, we should continually pray for the restoration of the visible Unity of the Church. We can

do far worse than this, from the BCP: For the Unity of God's People.

O GOD, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord: that as there is but one Body and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. – BCP p. 37.

Father Nicholas Henderson
Vicar of Saint Patrick's Mission
Brevard, NC



Holy Week – Good Friday, April 7

Morning Prayer, - Second Lesson – John 18

“He went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden...” John 18:1

Today we focus on the Cross, and rightly so. Many of us will this day journey to our churches and spend time by the foot of the Cross. And yet, this all began in the garden. This is because the battle came to a head in the garden. It was there that Christ made the final decision to die for us. It was in the garden that our redemption was decided; it was on the cross that it was accomplished. From the moment Jesus decided to go forward and die, He surrendered himself into the hands of his enemies. From then on, He was bound to die – unless He denied all for which He had lived. From the moment He delivered himself into the hands of his enemies, even if He said nothing, He would die. The moment of decision was in the garden.

We often think about the suffering of Christ on the Cross but there were other sufferings on His way from the Garden to Calvary. It was Satan’s hour. Jesus Himself described it that way, and the prince of darkness made sure that every step of the way that Christ had chosen should be painful. First there was the betrayal. Jesus had known from the beginning who

it was who would betray Him; but, even so, now that the moment had come, how much it must have hurt. You can hear the pain in His words, “Judas, would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?” And the soldiers arrest Him. Peter rushes in, as usual, without thinking and, drawing his sword, cuts off the ear of Malchus, the high priest’s slave. Not only had Judas betrayed Jesus; now Peter failed Him. Maybe his motive was love, but his action showed he had completely misunderstood all of Jesus’ teaching about the nature of his kingdom. And then all the disciples abandon him and run for their lives.

He was taken first to Annas, then to Caiaphas, as they sought for evidence to condemn Him. And condemn Him they did, when He told the truth. He was condemned not only for telling the truth, but being the Truth. He was condemned by the very people He was sent to save. While this occurred, Peter crept back to see what was happening. As he denied Christ for the third time, Christ knew. We often think of Peter’s feelings as we read the words, “And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.” But what about Christ’s feelings? How evil of Satan to make that last bitter twist of the knife in the wound.

As Jesus went to the Cross, there wasn’t anything He could point to and say, “Well, that at least survives.” At the end He was left with only the twelve. One of those had betrayed Him, the rest had not understood what His teaching was all about and they had all ran off and

left Him. Finally, the one He had chosen as the rock on whom He would build his Church had just said, “I swear I do not know that man.”

Of course, we know the end of the story. We know about Easter Sunday and Pentecost. But do not let that lessen your understanding of Good Friday. It was the human Jesus, the man Jesus, who went through that Thursday night and that Friday morning. To the human Jesus, where was Sunday? This was Friday morning and he was tired, he was alone, and he was a failure.

Father Erich Zwingert
Rector of All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Holy Week – Holy Saturday, April 8

*CHRIST our Passover is sacrificed for us: * therefore let us keep the feast,*

*Not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; * but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

*CHRIST being raised from the dead dieth no more; * death hath no more dominion over him.*

*For in that he died, he died unto sin once: * but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*CHRIST is risen from the dead, * and become the first-fruits of them that slept.*

*For since by man came death, * by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*

*For as in Adam all die, * even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, * and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, * world without end. Amen.*

As we prepare to celebrate together the Feast of Feasts and Queen of Feasts, the Christian Passover, the glorious Third-Day Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from the dead on

Easter Day, let us turn to contemplate one of the greatest liturgical treasures in Anglicanism, and yet one of the least familiar and utilised, the beautiful Easter Canticle found on page 162 in the Prayer Book.

What does the Easter Canticle teach us about the mighty Resurrection of Our Lord? In I Corinthians 5:7-8, Saint Paul illustrates Our Lord's triumphant conquest of death as the fulfilment of the Jewish feasts of Unleavened Bread and Passover: as every Jewish family cleansed its home of leavened bread before the feast (Exodus 12:14-20), so Christians are urged to remove sin from their midst and to celebrate the Liturgy in purity and holiness of life.

Christ is our Passover, our Paschal Sacrifice, the revelation of the true meaning of the day of preparation for the Old Testament Passover. On the day of preparation, unblemished lambs were slaughtered in the Temple for the ensuing feast, as simultaneously all leaven in Israel was discarded. The two feasts of Unleavened Bread and Passover coincided. The old Passover was celebrated by eating the Paschal Lamb of the sacrifice, and the old feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated by eating only unleavened bread for seven consecutive days.

The Lord Jesus is both the new and true Passover, whose passion and resurrection liberate us from slavery to sin, evil and death, and the new and genuine Unleavened Bread, the Bread of Life, whose perfect and all-sufficient Sacrifice is made present and pleaded in the Eucharist and whose precious Body and Blood

are received in Holy Communion. The Blessed Sacrament is Christ our Passover, Christ our Feast, Christ the Priest and Victim of the new and eternal covenant.

In Romans 6:9-11, we are reminded that Our Lord's real human death is unrepeatable and has resulted in His ultimate physical glorification and immortality: because Christ destroyed death by His own death, to which He was freely and voluntarily subject, His risen humanity, body and soul, is forever victorious over death. Now for all eternity Christ lives, Christ conquers, Christ reigns – and we shall live, conquer and reign because of Him, in Him and through Him and for Him. Christ has destroyed the power of sin through death, and, thus united to Him in His death, we shall overcome sin and live forever in Him.

In I Corinthians 15:20-22, Saint Paul uses the ancient Jewish liturgy to explain the mystery of the Resurrection. In ancient Israel, the first portion of a crop was offered to God in the Temple as a consecration of the entire expected harvest to come (Leviticus 23:10-14); so the Lord Jesus is the first of many to be raised in glory, and His resurrection Body is an offering that ensures a whole harvest of believers will be raised to eternal life as He was. The contrast of Adam and Christ demonstrates the power and impact of Our Lord's Resurrection. Death is the result of sin. Sin began with and in Adam, and because of Adam's transgression, the totality of the human race since has been destined to enter the world alienated from God

and to die. Christ saves us from death, because His victory over sin reverses the disobedience and consequences of Adam's fall and provides us with the promise that our fallen and mortal bodies, once broken by sin, will be raised to eternal glory and new life. Christ, the New Man, the New Adam, the New Creation, restores us to communion with God by His glorification and healing of our human nature. Adam was the head of a wounded and corrupted humanity; Christ is the Head of the New Creation, the Church.

And finally, as we ready our hearts and souls for the Resurrection of Our Lord, let us compare the biblical theology and profound eloquence of the Easter Canticle in the Prayer Book tradition with another truly exquisite liturgical hymn for Easter Day, that composed by Saint John of Damascus, the Seal of the Fathers and the last great synthesiser of Christian theology who died in AD 750, the Canon of Easter as found in the Eastern Rite:

“It is the Day of Resurrection! Let us be radiant, O people! Easter! The Lord's Easter! For Christ our God has brought us from death to life, and from earth unto heaven, as we sing triumphant hymns! Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ, radiant with inaccessible light of the Resurrection, and shall hear Him saying clearly, ‘Rejoice!’”

As we sing the triumphant hymns, let heavens rejoice in a worthy manner, the earth be glad, and the whole world, visible and the invisible, keep the Feast. For Christ our eternal joy has risen! Come let us drink a new beverage,

not miraculously drawn from a barren rock, but the fountain of Incorruption springing from the tomb of Christ in whom we are established.

Now all things are filled with light: heaven and earth, and the nethermost regions. So let all creation celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, whereby it is established. Yesterday, O Christ, I was buried with Thee, and today I arise with thy arising. Yesterday I was crucified with Thee. Glorify me, O Saviour, with Thee in thy Kingdom.

When at dawn, the women with Mary came and found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, they heard from the angel: Why seek among the dead, as if He were a mortal man, Him who lives in everlasting light? Behold the grave-clothes. Run and tell the world that the Lord is risen, and has slain death. For He is the Son of God who saves mankind...”

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed!
Alleluia! May the Lord Jesus Christ, our True God, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world and risen from the dead, bless you and all you love in this Eastertide!

The Most Reverend Chandler Holder Jones
Presiding Bishop, Anglican Province of America
Bishop, APA Diocese of the Eastern United States

Easter Day – Sunday, April 9

Homily For Easter Day

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – John 20:1-10

by Saint Gregory the Great

(Homily 22 on the Gospels, The Anglican Breviary
C326-7)

Brethren, the lesson which ye have just heard from the holy Gospel, is clear enough if it be considered in its historical sense only. However, not only does it contain history, but also suggestions of a mystic import, into which it is meet that we should at least make a brief inquiry. The evangelist saith that Mary Magdalene came to the sepulchre early, when it was yet dark. By these words, according to the historical interpretation, is known the time of her visit. But according to a mystical interpretation, there is also set forth the state of mind of her who just came, and sought the sepulchre, namely, in these words, “It was yet dark.” For Mary was seeking after the very Author of life. But she was seeking Him as though He were lifeless, even as she had seen Him, in bodily fashion. And because she could not on this wise find Him, she thought that His body had been stolen. Therefore, truly, she was as yet in darkness.

And she ran quickly, and told Peter and John; of whom we read that they also ran. Verily, those who are most exercised by love, do go more quickly, and

further, than other folk. So Peter and John ran, both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. But note that he paused there, and waited, and did not at once enter in. Peter, however, when he came, went at once, and that boldly, into the sepulchre. Brethren, of what does this haste put us in mind? Is there no subtlety here, no mystic meaning? Doubtless the evangelist would not have said of himself, "Yet went he not in," if in that reverent shrinking of his there had been no mystery. For John, like the synagogue of the Jews, waited upon knowledge; whereas Peter, like the church of the Gentiles, came at once, although blindly, to the mystery of the empty sepulchre.

We have also heard how, according to the evangelist Mark, Mary Magdalene, and the other holy women who had followed the Lord, came to the sepulchre, bringing sweet spices. For him whom they had loved in life, they also served in death, and that with all care and tenderness. But in this there is indicated something which is to be done by all of us who are members of holy Church. If we, who believe in Him that was dead and is alive again, do come, seeking the Lord, and bearing with us the perfume of good works, and the sweet odor of holiness, then do we come as it were to his empty sepulchre bearing spices which are sweet indeed.

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