

Third Sunday after Easter, 2008

Preached at Saint Luke's Church, Sedona, AZ, on April 13, 2008
by the Rt. Rev. David Gregory McMannes



ALMIGHTY GOD, who shewest to them that are in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness: grant unto all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Religion that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same. [Through.]

EPISTLE. 1 Saint Peter 2:11-17

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;


14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

GOSPEL. Saint John 16:16-22

 16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

This past week someone I've known a long, long time died, and to some it was unexpected, I'll bet. Oftentimes it matters not how old a person is at their death, many folk act surprised at a person's passing, and it doesn't seem to matter if the person is nineteen or ninety-nine.

Why? Because we forget about eternity while in the midst of the temporal. It's hard to understand when we analyze it. One would think that all the hints of the limited nature of the temporal would point us to the eternal, but they don't. And because we don't remember that Jesus always speaks of eternity and that we are intrinsically tied to Him through our beliefs and our vows to Him, it is easy to immerse ourselves solely in the sensate, so that we think not of that which is inevitable - and I'm not talkin' about taxes.

So today we are blessed as we ponder the inevitable, and Jesus speaks not only to his disciples but to you and me, also, "*Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*"

Jesus isn't speaking of seeing his disciples immediately after His resurrection (which seems to be the obvious) but of things to come in eternity - on the other side of the river Jordan.

Jesus speaks of the eternal, even in the midst of the temporal. That's the first truth we celebrate this day.

It is a good time to recall the eternal nature not only of God, but of all who are His in Christ - you and me. We are not earthbound, but bound for glory - for Beulah land.

And so when someone does something stupid, we can't merely excuse him by saying something like, "*Oh, he's just human.*" Neither can we excuse ourselves with that declarative analysis, because it's a lie. God created us, in the beginning in His image, but then came "The Fall" - check it out in Genesis, and read of the first man and woman, and you will be reading of man's choice not to live life fashioned in God's image, but rather his own. The story of Adam and Eve tell us the drama of it all.

In Christ - the New Adam - we have been given that "image of God" back once again. What WAS fallen has been raised up. We need not be inhibited by life's choices, but are freed from, as the epistle puts it, the "*fleshly lusts which war against the soul.*" Christ has raised us up from the muck and mire of this world, and therefore, when we choose to sin instead of living as we are called by God to live, we are not being "human" but sub human. We are embracing the "animal" part of our existence, instead of living in godliness, living a life which only takes into account that which is seen, tasted, touched, smelled, heard - the sensate, and we then act as if the answer to Peggy Lee's question (remember her song?) "*Is That All There Is?*" is a resounding "*You bet, this is it!*"

Such an existentialist approach to life is a set-up for despair, emptiness, defeat, and a life lived with a spiritual nearsightedness that inevitably concludes that "*Yes, all there is to life is what we experience today.... and perhaps tomorrow.... but surely not into that cosmic 'nothingness' called eternity, because when we're dead, we're dead. That's it.*"

That's a temptation for us all, to be sure. I remember my first wrestlings with these issues. It happened immediately before I entered the Army in 1968 - certainly a goofy time for many of us. Two weeks before leaving Iowa and going into basic training I read Albert Camus' uplifting (?) book, "*The Stranger.*" Then the next week (before flying away in that "first flight" in an airplane) I went to see two movies in two days, both at the local "art" movie theater in my college town. First I saw that celluloid portrayal of disillusionment "*David and Lisa,*" a story of a bright young man with a severe case of "obsessive-compulsive disorder" (OCD) who gets involved with a young woman with "dissociative identity disorder." The next day I went to the film version of William Golding's, "*Lord of the Flies,*" which is ANYTHING but a light-hearted discussion of how culture created by man inevitably fails. Angst-on-the-screen: *Angstus celluloidous!!!*

Most assuredly, an interesting time in my life; however, some folk live their whole life as if their basis for it is constructed on such works, or on what Moliere (that 17th century comedic playwright) is supposed to have said as he lay dying - "*Pull the curtain, the farce is over.*" His farce may have been over, but dear, dear Peggy Lee, this is **not** all there is.

We cannot call life a farce. Possibly, at times farcical, but not a farce. Maybe a trial, tribula-

tion, and certainly as Jesus tells us, filled with sorrow, and weeping, lamentation... but not a farce. Because He tells you and He tells me, and He tells all the faithful and even the unfaithful who listen not, "*Ye now ... have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*"

Jesus always speaks of eternity, and tells us that we are NOT earthbound.

II

Let's bring all this into our hearts, minds and soul. Last Sunday we heard Jesus speak of himself as the Good Shepherd, with the words, "*I am the good shepherd.... other sheep have I, and there shall be one flock, and one fold.*"

Christ always does that, you know: speaking of life-in-this-world He draws us into the eternal.

What are we, then, "making ready" for now? Leo the Great puts it this way, "*Our Lord's sheep will finally reach their grazing ground where all who follow him in simplicity of heart will feed on the green pastures of eternity. These pastures are the spiritual joys of heaven. There the elect look upon the face of God with unclouded vision and feast at the banquet of life for ever more.*"

That's what awaits us. But for now, there's sorrow, pain, anguish, hard work, wrongful suffering, being called "evildoers" by many. But we are called by God Himself to, "*put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*" by **good works** and by living life in the sure and certain hope and belief in Jesus' words, "*I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*"

In short, glorify God in all things, remembering to live life in the brilliance of the truth that it is God who shows, gives and is the Truth.

All else is folly, save the Lord Jesus Christ.

+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

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