

# Trinity 3

## Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Jer 31:1-14

Second Lesson: Matt 9:9-13

## Homily

Matthew was a traitor to his people.  
 He was a Galilean,  
 resident in Capernaum,  
 a Jew by birth.  
 From his other name, Levi,  
 it is thought by many  
 that he may have been of that tribe,  
 the tribe from which the priesthood was taken,  
 whose members, even if not priests,  
 had specific privileges and duties  
 in the worship of God in the Temple.  
 If so, he could have been there,  
 devout and respected,  
 honored by both God and men.  
 But NO.,  
 Matthew chose to reject his heritage,  
 and thus to reject his God.  
 He chose the route of wealth and privilege,  
 by allying himself with the hated Roman invaders,  
 and taking up the job of a tax collector,

or "publican" as the King James Bible translates it,  
 for the occupying power.

Oh yes, he became wealthy.

He became powerful,  
 having the power to have men put in prison,  
 able to reduce citizens to beggary,  
 feared, yes, but despised.

He had the grudging respect  
 of the Roman overlords,  
 but his own people rejected him entirely,  
 and loathed him more than the criminals  
 and the other unsavory people of the underworld.

We hear nothing at all about his family.

This is probably because they had rejected him,  
 and possibly even had a funeral for him,  
 declaring him dead.

This Matthew was at the office,  
 receiving the taxes the people paid unwillingly,  
 and extorting more from them for his livelihood.  
 Those walking by,  
 unless they had to do business with him,  
 averted their heads  
 and refused even to look at him,  
 and some of them,  
 as soon as they were safely out of sight,  
 would spit on the ground in disgust.

He was sitting there at his bench,  
 when the notorious preacher Jesus of Nazareth  
 walked by with a group of His followers.  
 He looked the despised traitor straight in the eye,  
 and said, "Follow me."  
 And Matthew, probably to his own surprise, did.

Later, he threw a party at his own house,  
 probably a goodbye party to all his friends,  
 as he was going to follow the Master in His  
 wanderings.  
 And who were his friends?  
 Publicans, in other words, more traitors,  
 and sinners, the dregs of the city,  
 those who deliberately broke the laws of Moses,  
 made their living in unacceptable ways,  
 and lived lives which shocked the religious people.  
 They were there --  
 and so was Jesus --  
 and the fine, upstanding religious leaders,  
 were shocked and scandalized.

*"But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them,  
 They that be whole need not a physician,  
 but they that are sick.  
 But go ye and learn what that meaneth,  
 I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:*

*for I am not come to call the righteous,  
 but sinners to repentance."*

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Focus your eyes on the cross for a moment.

***<<<turn toward the altar cross and keep  
 a noticeable moment of silence>>>***

Why was He there?  
 Who was He dying for?  
 Was it for the good, respectable people?  
 Or was it because there aren't any?

*"All have sinned  
 and come short of the glory of God."  
 The respectable no less than  
 the obvious and despised sinners.  
 The Pharisees were right  
 that Matthew did not deserve God's favor,  
 but they were so very wrong  
 to think that they did.*

He died for sinners.  
 It was for sinners that He came into the world.  
 It was sinners that he called and taught.  
 It was for sinners that he hung on that Cross.  
 His rising was for sinners.

His intercession is for sinners.  
 Holy Church, her sacraments and fellowship,  
 and the Holy Scriptures themselves,  
 are His gift to sinners.  
 Did you hear what Jeremiah said?  
 He was speaking to a nation  
 which had badly failed God,  
 and which was surely about to have a difficult time  
 because of that.  
 These were people  
 whom he had loudly condemned for their sins,  
 to whom he had promised judgment,  
 but yet, even they were not rejected.

*"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, "*  
 he said,  
*"saying,*  
*Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:*  
*therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. "*

Matthew deserved to be scorned,  
 but Jesus did not scorn him.  
 neither is it permitted that we do so.  
 We are sinners, all of us.  
 We are not better than those we want to despise.  
 He loved and loves them,  
 and so must we.

Matthew, the despised traitor,  
 became one of the twelve apostles  
 on whom Jesus built His Church.  
 He was one of the four called to write the Gospels.  
 He carried the Gospel to unbelievers,  
 and died for the faith of Christ.

The despicable one became a saint,  
 and so can we.

God so lead us and help us, in this mortal life,  
 and in the eternal ages to come,  
 through Christ our Lord. Amen.

# Trinity 3

## Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: Prov 16:18-24, 32

Second Lesson: Phil 1:27-2:4

## Homily

What does a Christian look like?

How is a Christian different from other people?

We've just come through the half of the year that asks, "Who is Christ"

"What is truth?"

"What does a Christian believe?"

In this "green season", we turn, for the most part, to other questions, to considerations of how this faith makes a difference in our lives.

Today's lessons are full of good advice, good advice that comes from the Holy Ghost, given to us through the pens of inspired writers.

*"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: "*  
writes St. Paul

The antique language of the King James version, though very precise, tends to hide what the Apostle was really saying. When he says "conversation", he's not talking about what we say, but about what we do.

The old definition was "way of life", and "to become" actually means "to ornament". So let's unpack that thought:

"Let the way you live," he's saying, "be an ornament to the sharing of the Gospel, so that the Gospel may be seen to be good." Is that what we are doing?

It may not be Lent, but self-examination is always in order, and that is just what these lessons are calling us to do.

This is not a weapon to use on someone else, but an arrow to pierce our own souls. And it's not all about things we've done, not an easy recipe for what to do in order to be right with God.

No, it's harder than that.

It's a challenge to the way we think and feel

"Pride goes before a fall," we are told.  
 Well, its it wrong to be proud of a job well done?  
 Or of a child who makes good?  
 Or of the beauty of your church's worship?  
 Or of a thousand other good things?  
 Of course not.  
 But does pride make me feel like a superior being?  
 Does it cause me to look down on someone else  
 as worth less than I am?  
 Does it cause me to demand respect  
 from someone else?  
 Does it keep me from loving my neighbor  
 as myself?  
 If it's any of those things, it will be my downfall.  
 It will separate me from God.

We are called on to be understanding,  
 to guard the words of our lips,  
 to use pleasant words.  
 Does that mean we can't correct those who are  
 wrong?

Of course not.  
 It's not a loving thing  
 to let someone rush over the cliff  
 without warning them, is it?  
 But just what are we doing?

Are we honestly offering our help out of love?  
 Or are we trying to make ourselves look good?  
 Are we conveying the truth  
 in the gentlest way we can?  
 Or are we using truth as a club  
 to beat people with?

"*..the instruction of fools is folly,*" it says.  
 That doesn't mean don't try to teach them,  
 but it does mean that arguing  
 to prove ourselves right, oftentimes doesn't work  
 and makes further efforts difficult or impossible.

Here's the key to what Proverbs is telling us:  
*He that is slow to anger  
 is better than the mighty;  
 and he that ruleth his spirit  
 than he that taketh a city.*

Sometimes anger is right,  
 but anger that comes quickly is dangerous,  
 and anger that takes over and runs us  
 is lethal.

It is we that are called to rule our emotions,  
 not our emotions that are called to rule us.

Is this easy?  
 Not at all.

It's the hardest thing a human being can ever do.  
Is it possible?

Well, without divine help, not really,  
but with the help of God all things are possible.

*"Only let your conversation  
be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: "*  
writes St. Paul

Let your living be an ornament for the Gospel.

You see,

If we will earnestly seek God,

tearfully repent of all our weaknesses,

(even when we want to say,

"I can't help it, so it's not my fault.")

and ask both forgiveness and a change of heart,

He will send His holy Spirit.

He will change us, if we let Him,

and the world will see what God can do.

Let us pray.

O Lord, lest, through our own frailty, or the temptations which encompass us, we be drawn again into sin, vouchsafe us, we beseech thee, the direction and assistance of thy Holy Spirit. Reform whatever is amiss in the temper and disposition of our souls; that no unclean thoughts, unlawful designs, or

inordinate desires, may rest there. Purge our hearts from envy, hatred, and malice; that we may never suffer the sun to go down on our wrath, but may always go to our rest in peace, charity, and goodwill, with a conscience void of offense toward thee, and towards men; that so we may be preserved pure and blameless, unto the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

# **Trinity 3**

## **Morning Prayer C**

First Lesson: Gen 9:1-17

Second Lesson: 1 Pet 3:17-4:6

## **Homily to be written**

# Trinity 3

## Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: Jer 23:1-8

Second Lesson: Luke 19:2-10

## Homily

*"... the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

The readings today should come as a challenge. Neither Jeremiah nor Our Lord intended, by these words, to bring comfort to the comfortable, or to reward the faithfulness of those who think of themselves as the righteous. Both lessons are directed to those who have strayed; both are directed to those who are not among the faithful few; and both bear a challenge to those who count themselves among the chosen.

Jeremiah takes a hard look at the pastors, the ones who have scattered the flock, driven them away,

and have failed to care for them.

We're Continuing Anglicans. We've watched, and are now watching, as a venerable church institution is falling apart, as its leaders reach and practice more and more serious error. We are tempted to see those pastors as the ones the prophet was taking about. In a lot of ways he certainly seems to be describing them, but one thing about Scripture is that every word, every line is directed at the hearer;

every word, every line is intended to change the hearts of those that hear. As Our Lord said, the beam in our own eye needs to be tended to before we can take the speck from another's eye.

*Ye have scattered my flock,  
and driven them away,  
and have not visited them: "*  
is what he said.

He is not addressing shepherds that led them astray, but those who stayed, and drove them out.



Zacchaeus is a case in point.  
 He was the leading tax collector (or publican)  
 in the city of Jericho.  
 Not only was he a traitor to his people,  
 cooperating  
 with the hated Roman occupying army,  
 but he had become rich  
 by extorting those from whom he collected taxes.  
 He was an outcast from Jewish society.  
 He would have been shunned in the synagogue,  
 and ignored on the streets,  
 and the religious leaders absolutely forbade  
 any of the faithful to eat with him,  
 or even to have more conversation  
 than was absolutely unavoidable.  
 He had strayed on his own,  
 but he had also been driven out,  
 and kept out.  
 Some of the rabbis would have advised his family  
 to have his funeral and count him dead.

Jesus welcomed him,  
 and sat down at his table with him,  
 and the shepherds were angry.

*"... the Son of man is come to seek and to save  
 that which was lost,"* responded the Saviour.

As Jeremiah said,

*"...behold,  
 I will visit upon you the evil of your doings,  
 saith the LORD.  
 And I will gather the remnant of my flock  
 out of all countries whither I have driven them,  
 and will bring them again to their folds;  
 and they shall be fruitful and increase.  
 And I will set up shepherds over them  
 which shall feed them:  
 and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed,  
 neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD."*

To seek and save the lost,  
 to gather those who have strayed,  
 to undo the evil done by the loveless.  
 That is what Jesus came for.  
 That is what He calls us to do

Jeremiah went on,  
 in words which prophesy the coming of Christ:  
*"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD,  
 that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch,  
 and a King shall reign and prosper,  
 and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.  
 ... he shall be called,  
 THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. "*

*"...Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the  
 LORD,*

*that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth,  
which brought up the children of Israel  
out of the land of Egypt; "*

That is,  
no longer a celebration of things long passed

*"But, The LORD liveth,  
which brought up and which led the seed of the  
house of Israel  
out of the north country,  
and from all countries whither I had driven them "*

That is, out of the sinful places to which they had  
been driven

*"and they shall dwell in their own land."*

*"... the Son of man is come to seek and to save  
that which was lost,"*

That is why Jesus came.

That is what he has called us to do:  
not to be comfortable in our religious ghetto,  
but to reach out with love to those who are lost,  
to welcome them home,  
to feed them with the truth,  
to bind up their wounds,  
to heal them.

Will we sit back in comfort

while others perish  
and perhaps hear the words spoken by the prophet?

*"behold,  
I will visit upon you the evil of your doings,  
saith the LORD."*

or will we step out of our comfort zone,  
seek out the straying, and hear instead,

*"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."*

Let us pray.

Deliver us, Lord, from a judgmental spirit,  
but lead us to answer sin and error  
with truth and love,  
and to draw the lost and straying,  
by the power of thy Holy Spirit,  
to thy cross and to the ways of righteousness,  
O Jesus, everlasting Saviour and Friend,  
who livest and reignest  
with the Father and the Same Spirit,  
both now and forever. Amen.

# **Trinity 3**

## **Evening Prayer B**

First Lesson: Ezek 34:20-24

Second Lesson: Luke 15:1-10

## **Homily to be written**

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## **Evening Prayer C**

First Lesson: 1 Sam 8

Second Lesson: Acts 8:5-25

## **Homily to be written**