

## Trinity 12

(There are three choices of propers for each office this week) Homiles are provided for Morning Prayer A, and for Evening Prayer A . Others are to be written.

### Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Ecclesiasticus 15:11-end

Second Lesson: Phil 2:12-18

### Homily

Free will.

Is there such a thing?

How does this question affect our responsibility?

It seems that this is always on our minds.

So often we assert one of two things,  
sometimes even in the same sentence,  
to try to excuse behavior  
we suspect may be wrong.

On one side we try to say that God has given us  
the right and ability to make up our own minds  
what is right and what is wrong,  
that there is no real absolute standard,  
which is why schools no longer teach morality,  
but instead practice, "values" education,  
to help each student decide for himself

what his own "values" are.

Absolute free will.

Even God has no right to decide for us.

On the other side there is the notion  
that everything is determined,  
that I am what I am and do what I do,  
and can't help it, because that is my nature.  
It comes down to either:  
"Well, it's the way God made me,"  
or, "The devil made me do it.",  
and there's no free will at all.

We tend to believe both at once,  
but today's lessons hit this question head on.

The writer of Ecclesiasticus tells us:  
Don't say, "God made it too hard,  
and that's why I strayed."  
If we love Him, we'll hate what He hates,  
and not want to do it.  
Don't say, "It's His fault I failed."  
There's no place for sin in His presence.  
He doesn't need it or want it.  
*He himself made man from the beginning,  
and left him in the hand of his counsel;*  
in other words, He made us

so that we could live according to His will.

*to keep the commandments,  
and to perform acceptable faithfulness.*

It's like the choice between fire and water, he says,  
we can stick our hand in either.

Which is better?

*For the wisdom of the Lord is great,  
and he is mighty in power,  
and beholdeth all things:  
And his eyes are upon them that fear him,  
and he knoweth every work of man.  
He hath commanded no man to do wickedly,  
neither hath he given any man licence to sin.*

We are both expected and commanded  
to do His will,  
to follow His commandments,  
to avoid sin,  
and to show mercy to all mankind.  
He has given no one permission to sin.

But, why can't I always do the right thing?  
Why do I keep messing up?  
Call it original sin.  
We're weak.  
We don't seem able to use our free will

the way God intends.

We so often choose the wrong path,  
and it feels as though we can't help it.  
And we feel guilty -- why is that?  
because God, working in us, tells us we've erred.  
Listen to what St. Paul said

*"Wherefore, my beloved,  
as ye have always obeyed,  
not as in my presence only,  
but now much more in my absence,"*

This church was doing pretty much  
what God did want,  
and St. Paul commended them for it.  
Philippi must have been a good church to be part of.  
Would that more of our churches were like that.  
But even to them he gave demanding advice:

*"work out your own salvation  
with fear and trembling. "*

There's a major responsibility to get it right,  
no matter how difficult it may be,  
but it's also obvious that the level of difficulty  
is more than any of us can handle.  
We fall short, over and over again,  
but we can grow in grace.

We can come ever closer to that goal.

How?

*For it is God which worketh in you  
both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Here it is.

We have complete responsibility for our actions.

We do sin and offend the holiness of God.

Our struggle sometimes seems hopeless.

But God doesn't want it that way.

By the Sacrifice of the Holy Cross,

by the infilling of the Holy Spirit,

He restores free will to us.

He makes us to know His will.

He causes us to know when we have strayed,

to feel guilty,

and to seek His forgiveness

and His cleansing power.

Original sin has taken our free will from us,

but He restores it,

makes us able to choose,

and calls us.

*"That [we] may be blameless and harmless,  
the sons of God, without rebuke,  
in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,  
among whom [we can] shine  
as lights in the world;*

*Holding forth the word of life; "*

Let us pray.

Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me, and know my thoughts.

See if there be any wicked way in me.

Lead me in the way everlasting,

that I may show forth the wonders of thy grace,

in this fallen world,

by the mercies of the cross

of Jesus Christ my Savior,

who liveth and reigneth

with thee and the Holy Ghost,

ever one God, world without end. Amen.

## **Trinity 12**

### **Morning Prayer B**

First Lesson: Ecclesiasticus 38:1-14

Second Lesson: Luke 4:31-44

### **Homily to be written**

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## **Trinity 12**

### **Morning Prayer C**

First Lesson: Gen 41:1a, 8, 14-40

Second Lesson: Col 3:22-4:6

### **Homily to be written**

# Trinity 12

## Evening Prayer A

**First Lesson: Tobit 13:1b-5, 7-11**

**Second Lesson: Romans 15:14-21**

## Homily

*“Blessed be God that liveth for ever,”*  
says Tobit, *“and blessed be his kingdom.*

*For he doth scourge, and hath mercy:...”*

and again, *“... he will scourge us*  
*for our iniquities, and will have mercy again...”*

and once more, *“... he will scourge thee*  
*for thy children's works,*  
*and will have mercy again...”*

Do we see a pattern here?  
Is it the kind of pattern we like to see?  
Does it make us feel all comfortable,  
all warm and fuzzy?  
Or is it perhaps the kind of pattern  
that we need to hear, like it or not?  
Do we, perhaps need to hear things  
that just don't fit our idea of how it should be?

There's a little call and response  
that often appears in the middle  
of an Evangelical sermon, like this:

preacher: God is good  
answer: All the time  
preacher: All the time  
answer: God is good

That, of course, is entirely true,  
but what do we mean when we say such things?  
Do we mean that God does only those things  
that look good to us?  
We've all heard the challenge from unbelievers,  
pointing at some dreadful occurrence or other:  
“How could a good God allow such a thing?”

To ask that question is to miss the point.  
While we cannot understand the mind of God,  
there are certain things about His mind,  
and about the things that He does,  
that we can know.

We know that He loves mankind,  
that He made us in His own image,  
simply out of love for us,  
and that He deeply, infinitely,

desires us to be with Him forever,  
to have a place at the very center of His own life..

We also know, however, that God is good,  
perfectly and infinitely good,  
and that there is no evil at all in Him,  
nor can there be.

That produces a problem,  
since there is evil in us,  
and we are being called to be in Him,  
but our evil cannot be in Him,  
something has to change -- in us.

You see, we were made in God's image.  
That includes free will,  
to obey Him or not,  
and mankind has consistently chosen not to obey.  
Disobedience is sin.  
Sin makes us unfit to be in God.

*"All Have sinned," says St. Paul,  
"and come short of the glory of God ...  
The wages of sin is death ..."*

If we simply cannot be accepted as we are,  
a good God, an entirely good God,  
would be expected to ignore us,

and leave us to the fate we have earned,  
and have (if the truth be known) striven for.  
Sinful man cries out, "Let me alone",  
and a merely good God would do just that.  
But He loves us, with an everlasting love,  
as the Prophet said,  
and so has drawn us to Himself.

But we aren't able to go.  
What needs to be done if something dirty  
is going to be brought into a clean place?

It has to be cleaned up, doesn't it?  
As we've already heard:

*he doth scourge, and hath mercy:..."*

*and again, "... he will scourge us  
for our iniquities, and will have mercy again..."*

*and once more, "... he will scourge thee  
for thy children's works,  
and will have mercy again..."*

Though the seriousness of our sin  
really does cry out for the wrath of God,  
and really does make it impossible to come to Him,  
we usually just don't know how bad it is,

anymore than a little boy knows  
 that he's too dirty to sit down at the dinner table.  
 We try to make excuses.  
 We claim that it's not really all that bad,  
 and try to convince ourselves  
 that we're "good enough" to enter heaven;  
 but we aren't,  
 and if we are to get there, we need to know that.  
 God could just turn away,  
 let us have it our way,  
 and leave us to an everlasting darkness.  
 He could let us think that we're OK  
 (which is what a lot of people do think),  
 but we are not OK,  
 and we aren't ever going to be clean enough  
 unless we let Him clean us up.  
 We have to know when we are in the wrong.  
 And it is by God's mercy that we get a spanking,  
 that we get enough discipline from Him  
 to remind us of our need.

God loves us and wants us.  
 How much?  
 Well, listen to the words of Jesus  
 in the third chapter of St. John:  
*"God so loved the world,  
 that He gave His only begotten Son,  
 that whosoever believeth in him*

*should not perish,  
 but have everlasting life."*

When we know our sin,  
 when we know we need to be cleaned up,  
 if we look up, there is the cross.  
 There is the one sacrifice once offered  
 for the sins of the whole world.  
 There is the mercy freely offered  
 to those who simply cannot help themselves.  
 He has not left us to our own devices.  
 He has not abandoned us to the fate we deserve.  
 He has saved us from putting ourselves in Hell.

Thank God for His loving hand of correction.  
 Thank Him for showing us our need.  
 Thank Him for leading us to the Cross.  
 Thank Him for that Sacrifice once offered,  
 and ever encountered in the Eucharist.

O Saviour of the World,  
 who by thy Cross and precious Blood  
 hast redeemed us,  
 Save us and help us,  
 we humbly beseech thee, O Lord.  
 Amen.

## **Trinity 12**

### **Evening Prayer B**

First Lesson: Isa 29:18-24

Second Lesson: Mark 7:31-37

### **Homily to be written**

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## **Trinity 12**

### **Evening Prayer C**

First Lesson: 2 Sam 15:1-23

Second Lesson: Acts 15:36-16:5, 9-15

### **Homily to be written**