

**SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER**  
**Good Friday<sup>1</sup>**

**Lessons:<sup>2</sup>**

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the thirteenth Verse of the fifty-second Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.<sup>3</sup>

“Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; be-

cause he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the eleventh Verse of the second Chapter of First Epistle General of St. Peter.<sup>4</sup>

“... Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 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. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 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. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye

teem; the Cross. So, you don’t need to go looking for the Cross, because the world is quite aggressive in providing it. Like the Son of God, who endured the Cross, and thought nothing of the shame of the Cross, for the joy set before Him,<sup>7</sup> may each of you have grace to endure, to hope, and to follow in His footsteps. The suffering is but for a moment; the joy is eternal.

On His Cross, the Good Shepherd died for us; and by His Cross He showed to us how to follow Him on the path of Life.

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The Rev’d Robert Hart<sup>8</sup>  
April 22, 2012

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Epistle and Gospel for Mass on the Second Sunday after Easter, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> *An Alternative Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised in 1928)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, WITH THE ADDITIONS AND DEVIATIONS PROPOSED IN 1928 36 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxix (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxvii (CIPBC 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 52:13—53:end (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> I Peter 2:11-end (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> St. Matthew 23:7.

<sup>6</sup> I Corinthians 12:27.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 12:2.

<sup>8</sup> Rector, St. Benedict’s Anglican Catholic Church, Chapel Hill, NC.

Some men receive Holy Orders and become hirelings; and, if they are not hirelings for money, they may be hirelings for something else. I see, sometimes, young men who were ordained much too early, and who imagine that the priesthood will give them status and prestige. They love the title, they love the vestments, and, they remind me all too often of the words of Jesus, about the Pharisees who loved greetings in the market-places, and to be called of men, *Rabbi*.<sup>5</sup> Well, if they stick long enough, they find the Cross that they cannot get around. That is when they find out if they were ordained for the right reason.

Look at the closing words of the Gospel for that Good Shepherd Sunday: “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd.” I have no doubt that this speaks mainly about the inclusion of the Gentiles, the grafting in of non-Jews to the cultivated olive tree of Israel. These words only started to be fulfilled when St. Peter went to the House of Cornelius to see Pentecost repeated and the Holy Spirit poured out on Gentiles. It is also right for us to see that, even today, there remain yet other sheep, not of this fold, who need to be brought in.

The work is far from over, and each of you may have a share of that work. Because “you are the Body of Christ and members in particular,”<sup>6</sup> each endowed with special gifts for ministry by the Holy Spirit, you are called to share the work of bringing in those other sheep. And that is a win-win proposition. It is good for the parish, and good for them, indeed, a life-line sent out to them.

If we are to work in God’s field with all the mess sheep bring, and the dangers presented by the wolf, we need not worry about finding the Cross. It always finds us if we are faithful to Christ. It will be there; that I can promise each of you. The Cross, in some form or other, is all that the fallen sinful world has for true servants of Jesus Christ. Not honor, respect or es-

do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

### **Homily:**

The Second Lesson we read today is drawn, as I hope many of you have noticed, from that very famous Suffering Servant passage in the book of Isaiah, specifically chapters 52:13--53:12. I have said before that the Suffering Servant passage goes beyond Christ’s atoning death, predicting as well His Resurrection by telling us that He would, after death, “prolong his days” as the agent of God’s Will. It predicts the day of Pentecost by telling us that Christ would “divide the spoil with the strong.” This echoes words from Psalm 68:18: “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men.”

But as the chapter draws to a close, the prophet takes us back to the Cross, because that was the main thrust of this particular passage. In this way the Holy Spirit reminds us, through the prophetic oracle, that all of the grace, and, indeed *every* gift, that God gives to us has come by way of the Cross of Christ. St. Anselm taught that Christ did all the work, and after earning a great reward for His labor, gives away all of the benefits of His work. He gives all of the earning, profit and reward to us. For He is God the Son, and has need of nothing.

The emphasis of that passage is what Jesus did for us, and very importantly, what He did as *the One for the Many*. And I can think of no better summary of that prophetic passage about the sacrifice Jesus offered of His own life, than the words of St. Paul from the fifth chapter of Romans:

“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

So, we get that message, that Jesus died for our sins just as scripture foretold. St. Peter puts it to us with great force: “who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” That’s the first message. Christ offered Himself as the Lover of mankind, in fact, as the one who loves you. He is the sacrifice not just for the whole world, but for you; dying as much for *each* as for *all*. This is why I tell you so often: when you look up at the Crucifix where He pours out His soul unto death, and you see His love there, take it personally.

Today’s Second Lesson includes the passage that is assigned as the Epistle on the Second Sunday after Easter, which is often referred to as “Good Shepherd Sunday”. When we pray the Collect that day, we ask for understanding and for grace to see in His death two very important things that go together. This is what we then pray: “Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavor ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through the same, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*” This Collect is itself drawn from that Epistle, that is, from today’s Second Lesson.

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not: but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray: but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”

This follows an exhortation to be patient when suffering wrongfully. “If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” Peter tells us that when we follow Christ our Lord, we may expect to find the Cross awaiting us. When we find it, and find no way around it, we may embrace it as the will of God, just as Jesus did.

The Lord spoke clearly of the difference between a true shepherd and a mere hireling, “whose own the sheep are not.” The Church has had its fill of hirelings. We know that the Church must tend to business in this world. Indeed, every family must conduct business. We all must have a place to live, food on the table, and utilities. So the Church, like every family, must engage in a certain amount of practical business. Jesus sent His disciples to buy the things needed for the Passover; every family must conduct these practical matters of business.

But, though the Church must take care of a certain amount of necessary practical matters of business, the Church is not *a* business. We are not here to earn a profit (and thank God, because we would be failures if we had to be judged by the criteria of the marketplace). And, the work of the clergy is to serve as shepherds, and so carry on the work of Jesus Himself. It is to care for God’s people, not to devour them, and not to abandon them in the face of danger, like the hireling who sees the wolf coming, and flees.