

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER¹
The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity
(Year II)

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the second Chapter of the Book of Ruth.³

“And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband’s, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech [**ee-LIMB-uh-leck**]; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech [**ee-LIMB-uh-leck**].

“And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed [**SHOWD**] me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how

thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah **[EE-fah]** of barley.

“And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed. And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed **[SHOWD]** her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man’s name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.”

To which may be added:

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than

bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth....”

Conclusion:

However, having answered that question, we find ourselves posed with another one:

If in our outward gestures and postures we honor God the Son and God the Father, do we likewise honor them in our hearts and in our minds? Does our deportment and our manner of life—what the King James translation refers to as our “conversation”—display to others, and to ourselves, that we are sincere in our honoring of God? Are we inwardly committed to Him, or are the gestures we make toward Him mere empty, outward show?

There will be an examination on that, immediately after the Church Period of creation’s history.

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March 24, 2013

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Epistle for Holy Communion on Palm Sunday, 2013.

² *The Table of Lessons*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xli (Anglican Church of Canada 1962).

³ Ruth 2:1-20a (KJV).

⁴ Ruth 4:13-17 (KJV).

⁵ Philippians 2:1-18 (KJV).

⁶ Philippians 2:9-11 (RSV).

⁷ Philippians 2:10 (RSV).

⁸ Philippians 2:9 & 11 (RSV).

⁹ St. John 8:46-59.

¹⁰ St. John 8:49-58.

¹¹ St. John 12:26b (RSV).

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seven sons, hath born him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”⁴

Here endeth the First Lesson.

Here beginneth the second Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Philippians.⁵

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in

vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”⁶ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Introduction:

Sometimes, when one is in church one looks around at the other worshippers. Perhaps doing so is evidence of an unseemly inattention to the important task to which we are there to give our best participation, but I think that if it is a little bit improper to sneak a peak at those who are with us, it is certainly a minor, and extremely human, failing that can easily be forgiven.

And when one does give in to that little temptation, one often notices—at least, in traditional churches one notices—that many of our fellow-worshippers change their postures whenever the Name of Jesus is pronounced during the service. For those who are disposed to this practice, it may be as discreet as a nod of the head; sometimes it is a small but noticeable bow; and in extreme cases, someone may actually genuflect or—if really committed to traditional Anglican practices—give the deep “Sarum Bow” that is our graceful answer to the Roman genuflection.

Theme:

Because Jesus is mentioned quite frequently in most of our services, this practice can result in a considerable amount of

nodding. Sometimes, in truly “Jesus-dense” services, it can turn the worshipper into a sort of ecclesiastical “Bobble-Head Doll”.

But if you have ever noticed this devotional practice, and wondered whence it arose, wonder no longer. St. Paul gives the answer in today’s passage from his Epistle to the Philippians.

Development:

The short and simple answer, of course, is that when we nod, or bow, or genuflect each time we hear the Name of Jesus read aloud, we are symbolically complying with St. Paul’s injunction “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth....”⁷ And St. Paul tells us the reason we should make this acknowledgement is that “God has highly exalted [Christ Jesus] and bestowed on him the name which is above every name ... to the glory of God the Father.”⁸

So when we give due obeisance to Our Lord Jesus the Christ, then through the honor we pay to Him we are thereby giving honor to God the Father. It is as Jesus said to the Pharisees in the Gospel for Passion Sunday,⁹ by giving honor to Him, then through Him we simultaneously honor the Father Who sent Him to us.¹⁰

That is the answer to the questions, why are our neighbors in church so often bobbing their heads or bowing themselves down whenever the name Jesus is read out in our services? They are remembering St. Paul’s words to the Philippians, about how by honoring God the Son we likewise honor God the Father. Or as St. John reports Jesus as saying, “[I]f any one serves me, the Father will honor him.”¹¹

We therefore give due honor to “God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible....” when “at the name of Jesus every knee should