

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER
The Seventh Sunday after Trinity¹
(Year II)

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the fifty-second Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.³

“Zedekiah [**zeh-dih-KYE-uh**] was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Hamutal [**huh-MYOU-t’l**] the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah [**LIB-nuh**]. And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim [**dguh-HOY-uh-kim**] had done. For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah [**zeh-dih-KYE-uh**] rebelled against the king of Babylon.

“And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadrezzar [**NEBB-you-kad-REZZ-ur**] king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah [**zeh-dih-KYE-uh**]. And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king’s garden; (now the Chaldeans [**koll-DEE-unz**] were by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain.

“But the army of the Chaldeans [**koll-DEE-unz**] pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah [**zeh-dih-KYE-uh**] in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah [**RIB-luh**] in the land of Hamath [**HAY-math**]; where he gave judgment upon him. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah [**zeh-dih-KYE-uh**] before

his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah [**RIB-luh**]. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah [**zeh-dih-KYE-uh**]; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the sixteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.⁴

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew [**SHOW**] you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [**SHOW**] it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew [**SHOW**] it unto you.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

the fullness of Your truth, let us day by day understand and accept more and more, until in Your time we and all Your Saints are ready to be brought into the joy of Your Eternal Kingdom. This we pray in the Most Holy name of Jesus. Amen.

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The Rev'd Larry Wagoner, MSW¹⁰
April 28, 2013

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion on the Fourth Sunday after Easter, 2013.

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

³ Jeremiah 52:1-11 (KJV).

⁴ St. John 16:1-15 (KJV).

⁵ St. John 16:12-13 (KJV).

⁶ From the movie "A Few Good Men", 1992, Castle Rock Entertainment.

⁷ St. John 16:13 (KJV).

⁸ St. John 16:13 (KJV).

⁹ St. John 16:13 (KJV).

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Text:

From the Second Lesson: "*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew [SHOW] you things to come.*"⁵ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

Most of us remember that line in the movie, "A Few Good Men", in which Jack Nicholson, playing the part of Colonel Nathan Jessup, loses his cool while testifying in the trial of two Marines for murder, yelling at Lieutenant Daniel Kaffee, played by Tom Cruise, "You can't handle the truth!"⁶

While the scene was interesting, if unlikely—one wonders why the prodding of a lawyer in a courtroom would rattle an experienced Marine, used to facing far more deadly enemies, into admitting his guilt—it did point to a reality few of us like to admit. We all like to think we are rather mature and disciplined, ready to handle whatever life may throw at us.

Sometimes, however, there are truths we are simply not ready for. Jesus suggested that very same thing to His disciples as he prepared them for His Ascension into Heaven, telling them that while there remained many things He wished to tell them, they were not yet prepared for the full truth.

In the movie, Colonel Jessup is reduced to admitting all in a massive fit of hubris, but Jesus assures the disciples that the Holy Ghost will continue to teach and guide them, and "*he will guide you into all truth.*"⁷

Why could the disciples not yet bear to hear the full truth? Perhaps their faith was simply not yet strong enough. Perhaps they had been shaken too deeply by the events of the Crucifixion to stand more devastating news without doing permanent damage to the Church. Perhaps they simply did not yet have the depth of experience and personal maturity to handle the realization of what their task truly entailed and the trials they would face.

Whatever the reason, Jesus, in His full knowledge of who the disciples were and what their abilities were, determined that they were not yet prepared and able to handle all the information involved. Because He knew they were not ready, He did not damage them or the Church by giving too much knowledge too soon.

In this case, however, that withholding of some knowledge was couched in the larger message that they would in time understand all that He had to say to them. Their greater understanding and ability to deal with the fuller truth would come as they were led by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus refers to the Holy Ghost here as *“the Spirit of truth”*⁸ and says that Spirit of truth will guide the disciples *“into all truth.”* Not just the truths they might want to know, or those parts of truth that are comfortable and pleasant, but all truth.

Knowledge like that is a two-edged sword. It gives great influence and power, but also great and terrible responsibilities. Sometimes the truth is not pleasant. Sometimes the truth is dark and frightening, and involves knowing things with which we are not comfortable. Perhaps that is why Jesus knew His disciples were not yet ready for all that he wanted to tell them.

The loving-kindness of a God like that, a God who does understand what we are ready for—and what we are not pre-

pared for—is part of the glorious reality of Who our Lord is. He knows what we can stand because he became one of us. He experienced our fears, our weaknesses, our inabilities.

And so our Lord promises to send the Holy Spirit to teach the disciples—and to teach us—all truth. That truth, Jesus promises, will come from the Father and the Son.

*“For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”*⁹ The Holy Spirit will tell us what he knows from the Father and the Son, bringing us into the truth of God.

And, because God is possessed of all knowledge, of things past and to come, the Holy Spirit will show to the disciples the things that are yet to come. Those lessons will come as we are ready for them, we can remain assured. God will never give to us more than we can handle.

He will, however, give us those things that help us to grow, to expand, to become ever more inclusive and expressive of God’s love. It is as if God is being “age appropriate” with us, as those in the field of education like to say.

He knows what we are ready for, and gives us that. As we are ready for more, He gives us that additional information and knowledge, that we may use it to further understand, love, and worship Him.

We can but trust Him, and in time, when we are ready for it, we will hear the Holy Spirit say, “Now, you can handle the truth.”

Let us pray.

Lord, lead us each day to better understand Your will and Your way for us. Give us the maturity and the grace to be able to understand and function in Your truth. As we grow in