

The Parish Paper

OF

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Vol. 44 No. 38

The Transfiguration of our Lord (Trinity XI)

August 11, 2013

PREACHING REDEMPTION

I am perhaps exposing myself to comment when I say this, but I sometimes find a bad sermon as edifying as a good one. For such a sermon provokes me to preach a sermon to myself – and to guard against falling into the errors which I have detected in others! While on vacation I happened to hear such a sermon. It was well crafted and delivered, and (unlike the utterances of some greater prelates) it said nothing contrary to the Christian Faith. Its defect consisted in what it did *not* say – and in these things unsaid it exhibited some of the characteristic oversights and weaknesses to which Anglicans and Episcopalians in our time are prone.

The sermon was based on the 8th chapter of the book of the prophet Amos, a passage that begins with a vision of “a basket of summer fruit”, ripe for the eating, an image of Israel’s ripeness for judgment. The prophet denounces Israel for the exploitation and oppression of the needy and for the violation of the Sabbath by greed for dishonest gain: “Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may bury the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?”

It is a searing indictment of breaches

of God’s law and covenant with Israel. What I heard was sadly predictable – a mild, vague, well-intentioned guilt trip about North American middle class prosperity, with only a passing reference to the breach of the covenant. I have no problem about preaching that skewers those who heartlessly exploit the poor – but don’t give me vague milquetoast guilt trips; and don’t give me the usual alternative: the shrill, self-righteous, and utterly conventional denunciations of corporate greed that too often pass for moral seriousness. If there is a moral failure to be pointed out, be specific, bring the evidence, meet objections, and argue the case, and do so in terms of the moral order established by the law of God, not by some vague and secular moral standard. If you convince me, you will also convict and convert me.

If the first characteristic weakness of this sermon was the vagueness of its moral vision, the second weakness characteristic of much preaching today was its lack of theological vision, a lamentable silence about the work of God. The God of Israel, the God who gave the Covenant which Israel has violated by its contempt for the poor and the Sabbath, is not standing on the sidelines helplessly wringing his hands. As the prophet makes very clear, he is a God mighty in judgment, and powerful to bring home to Israel the consequences of its

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STANDING NOTICES

The occasional Sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony, Penance, Communion and Unction of the Sick, and the Office of Burial of the Dead are always available by appointment, at announced times, or as necessary.

HOSPITAL VISITATIONS

Please call the Church Office to inform the clergy if you or a loved one is in the hospital.

ST. JOHN'S WEB SITE

Parish Paper essays may be read on our web site:
www.stjohnssav.org

VESTRY OFFERING CHAIRMEN

8:00 Mr. Arthur D. Weed
10:30 Mr. Richard L. Wright

USHER CHAIRMAN

Mr. Ross Haire

The flowers at the altar this Sunday are given to the glory of God and in thanksgiving for St. John's Church, family and friends, by Mr. and Mrs. John C. Wylly, Jr.

And in loving memory of Dr. Albert J. Kelley and Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Compton by the Compton family.

The flowers at the chapel altar Wednesday August 14th, are given in honour of the 14th anniversary of Fr O' Brien's ordination as priest.

CHANCEL SOCIETY

Mrs. Carter C. Hubbard, Sr., Mrs. McDonald Fawcett
Mrs. Anne H. Mingleдорff, Mrs. David A. Young
Mrs. Nicholas Farley, Mrs. George Fawcett,
Mrs. John R. Reiter, Mrs. Shack B. Wimbish, Jr.

ACOLYTES

8:00 Lawson Turner
10:30 Chris Dixon, Charles Perrie
Mikel Kelly, Jamie McClellan
Hawkins Pindar, Turner Stevens

COFFEE HOUR CHAIRMAN

Mrs. William C. Rodgers

ADULT EDUCATION - SUNDAY 9:30 A.M.

This Sunday, Fr Dunbar will discuss Austin Farrer's sermon on *Predestination*. Dr. Bergstrom will complete Jeremy Taylor's "*The Marriage Ring*" next Sunday. (Chapel)

"*From Roaring Lions to Resurrection Life*"
Class will take a break from Aug 4—Sept 15.

MEN'S STUDY & DISCUSSION GROUPS

Thursday 7 a.m *Judges, Samuel, Kings,*
Reading Room (Fr. Dunbar).

All other Discussion Groups are in summer recess.

*The Church Office closes at Noon on Fridays
until Labor Day.*

JANE'S CANNERS

Jane's Canners are once again hard at work on Wednesdays and need figs, apples, peaches, pears, mangos, peppers, onions, and sugar. If you'd like to help or get involved with this activity call Jane Pressly 233-6551.

LAST WEEK'S MISSING PARISH PAPER

Due to lightning's striking the Church last week and damage to the computer system, (as well as organ and bells) we were not able to mail last week's Parish Paper. It is posted on the website.

PLEASE REMEMBER YOUR CHURCH IN YOUR WILL

sin: “The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and everyone mourn that dwelleth therein?” God will not forget the evil works of man; nor does he leave them unpunished. It is no preaching of the word of the prophets for us to speak only of the work of man, but not of the work of God, of the ethical but not of the religious. For the prophet, and the covenant of Israel, they are inseparable. The evil that is manifest in our works is first and foremost an error in faith, and a falling away from the Lord. Thus the evil works of Israel find their counterpart in the famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Those who do not hear and receive the word of the Lord in faith and obedience will find that word taken away from them.

If one speaks of man’s *sin*, one must also speak about God’s *judgment* on sin; but if one speaks about divine judgment, one must also speak of man’s *redemption*: and here also the sermon I heard was silent in a way too familiar from much preaching today. To be sure, the passage from Amos is an oracle of judgment, yet the lineaments of Good Friday’s redemption may be discerned in it: “I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: and I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your sons into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head, and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day”. Darkness at noon, feasts turned to lamentation, and mourning for an only son – what are these but the signs of the judgment borne for us by Christ, to redeem us

from our sins? There a door is opened to a new life of righteousness in the favour of God: and this surely is the point of preaching.

By all means let the preacher engage the listener in the moral struggle and challenge him to a deeper moral seriousness; but do not speak of man’s works, whether good or evil, without speaking of them in the context of the work of God. Preach to me of sin and righteousness, judgment and redemption; and I will listen, despite myself. I am not asking for fire and brimstone, just the still small voice that convinces, convicts, and converts. That’s the word of God preached. GGD

“DO THE CHARLESTON”

Live Band, Roaring Twenties dress, and Shenanigans at the Green-Meldrim House on Friday, November 8th from 7pm. to 10pm. Tickets \$50.00 per person. Space limited. RSVP by check to ECW in care of Patty Cooper, 39 Morningside Drive, Savannah, Georgia 31410.

PARISH KALENDAR THIS WEEK

Monday- Friday (Chapel)

8:15am & 5:30pm

Morning or Evening Prayer

In addition, on Wednesday 14th August

EVE OF THE DORMITION

9:45 a.m. *Litany*

10:00 a.m. *Sung Eucharist*

ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY

Wednesday August 14th, the Eve of the Feast of the Dormition, is the 14th anniversary of Fr O’Brien’s ordination as priest. We give thanks and pray for the faithfulness and fruitfulness of his ministry.

Mr. and Mrs. Roland B. Williams
 30 Houston Street
 Savannah, GA 31401-2833

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8:00A.M.–HOLY COMMUNION

Collect, Epistle, and Gospel.....247, 204
A continental breakfast is available in Cranmer Hall following this service.

9:30-12:00 Noon —Nursery (Cranmer Hall)

9:30—10:30 A.M. —ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

(Chapel and Cranmer Hall)

9:30 A.M. – NOON— PRESCHOOL-KINDERGARTEN SUMMER PROGRAM

(Cranmer Hall –activities for children during the 9:30 education and/or 10:30 service times)

10:30A.M. — SUNG EUCHARIST & SERMON

HYMN # 153 *Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies*.....Ratisbon
ANTE-COMMUNION

Collect for Purity.....Prayer Book, page 67
 The Decalogue 68
 KYRIE ELEISON: #710..... Healey Willan
 Collect and Epistle 247, 204
 HYMN #119 *O Wondrous Type* Wareham
 The Holy Gospel..... 248
 The Nicene Creed 71
 HYMN #346 *Fairest Lord Jesus* St. Elizabeth
 SERMON..... Fr. Dunbar

OFFERTORY

Sentences
 ANTHEM: *O Christ Who Art the Light and Day*..... Robert Whyte
 Presentation of Alms #139
 Prayer for the State of the Church 74

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation, Confession and Absolution..... 75
 Sursum Corda #734, Proper Preface 76, 77
 SANCTUS and BENEDICTUS #711..... Healey Willan
 Prayer of Consecration: Institution, Oblation, Invocation..... 80
 The Lord's Prayer and Prayer of Humble Access (*said with the congregation*)..... 82
 AGNUS DEI # 712..... Healey Willan
 HYMN # 207 *Here, O My Lord*..... Langran (#433)
 MOTET: *Hail True Body* Plainsong
 Thanksgiving (*said with the congregation*)..... 83
 GLORIA IN EXCELSIS #713 Healey Willan
 The Blessing (*Kneeling*)..... 84
 HYMN #357 *Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus*..... In Babilone
 ORGAN: *Psalms XIX*..... Benedetto Marcello

Everyone is invited to attend the Coffee Hour in the Green Meldrim House immediately after the 10:30 service. If you are a guest and visiting our Parish, please make yourself known.

12 Noon HOLY COMMUNION in the Chapel. (Collect, Epistle, Gospel as 8 a.m.)