

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

With this Sunday we enter upon the final cycle of the Sundays after Trinity. The end of the Church Year is approaching. Progressively the Kingdom of Righteousness has been presented, its declaration and its founding. It has been described to us, and we have learned the life demanded to be a citizen. We now approach its completion, its fulfillment, and enter the cycle of the Last Things. The end of the Church Year not only closes a complete round of instruction but is a dramatic parable of the close of life. The believer's life closes with the opening of the glories of the heavenly home, but he who has no wedding garment is cast into outer darkness. The tone of this cycle rings clear with promise but also with solemn, awful warning.

The central teaching of this Sunday is found in the words of the Epistle: "Put off your old nature . . . and be renewed in the spirit of your minds." The first note of this cycle of Sundays is struck when the Introit announces: "Say unto my soul, I am thy Salvation." In the holy Gospel our Lord reveals Himself as the Savior of body and soul. He proves by a miracle that He has the power to forgive sins. In the Nicene Creed, which is spoken or chanted after the reading of the holy Gospel, we say: "I believe one holy Christian and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." Between the confession of our belief in the family, the Church, and the confession of our hope in the resurrection and in the world to come, we confess our faith in Baptism for the remission of sins. The Epistle shows the effect of this forgiveness in our soul and life: "Put off your old nature . . . put on the new nature." All this in preparation for the Lord's coming. The Collect prays: "Keep us" from all hurtful things, make us free in body and soul to do Thy

works, the works of the renewed nature. Today's central teaching is "The Life of Renewal."

The Introit. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth. He delivereth them out of their troubles. He is their God forever and ever. Give ear, O My people, to My law; incline your ears to the words of My mouth."

As we enter the house of God, Christ comes to meet us and speaks a word of comfort but also of admonition. "I am with you, your Deliverance, your God. Let your only concern be to keep My law, My commandments."

The Collect. "O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done."

This is a prayer of pilgrims. We walk toward the eternal home, but the devil and our own lower nature cling like lead to body and soul. We pray for removal of the hindrances, so that we may cheerfully accomplish God's will.

The Epistle, Ephesians 4:22-28. Our most important task and duty in life is to put on the new nature in righteousness and true holiness. The old nature, the old man of the flesh and the lusts thereof, corrupt through deceitful lusts, palsied in sin, is to be awakened to newness of life, to the new nature, by the voice of the Savior. The new man, created after the likeness of God, is to arise. The Lessons teach us of things preparatory to the end and of life in the light of them, which is living toward the end.

The Gradual. "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Alleluia! Alleluia! Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvelous things. Alleluia!"

The incense of our prayer rising up to God and the lifting of our hands as an evening sacrifice may be regarded as symbols of our longing for heaven.

The Proper Sentence. "Alleluia! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy, and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies. Alleluia!"

Or: "Alleluia! Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers; praise Him and highly exalt Him forever. Alleluia!"

The Gospel, St. Matthew 9:1-8. Loving, serving brethren carry the palsied man into the presence of the Savior, who heals the needy man by first comforting and healing the soul and then mending the body. This man is a picture of our own selves. We, too, experience such a cure. We, too, were once lamed in our soul, but the Lord healed us. This happened at our Baptism. Every Sunday, also this day, has baptismal grace as a starting point and purposes to unfold it and bring it to maturity. But there is still much lameness in the soul. The world, our natural self, our lower nature, are like weights that keep our soul from soaring to loftier heights and keep us from rising above the earth. For this reason Christ has instituted the Sacrament of Holy Communion, to give us ever new momentum and to heal us of our spiritual disability and lameness of soul. The Eucharist is to make us ready for our heavenly home. So the holy Gospel joins the past, Holy Baptism; and the present, the Holy Communion; and the future, the Second Coming. On the Last Day it will be true also of us: "He rose and went home."

The Proper Preface. "Who with Thine only-begotten Son and the Holy Ghost art one God, one Lord. And in the confession of the true God we worship the Trinity in Person and the Unity in Substance, of Majesty coequal."

OUTLINE FOR SERMON ON THE EPISTLE

The subject of this Sunday is the life of renewal, a twofold renewal, not merely of the heart but of the whole life and conduct. In the Epistle the Apostle reminds the Ephesians that as members of Christ's mystical body they must no longer live as the Gentiles do, and admonishes them to put off their old nature and put on the new.

Renewal of Heart and Life

A. Renewal of the Heart. "Put off your old nature, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts." In the verses preceding the text St. Paul gives a picture of man apart from Christ, of the old nature that is

corrupt through deceitful lusts. The natural man has no true conception of the object and meaning of life. His mind becomes a prey to delusions, the understanding is darkened. From the mind, sin passes to the heart, and men become not only strangers to God but estranged from Him. Sin is no longer felt as pain, for the conscience becomes callous. Man plunges into every unhallowed thing with the greediness of lust. These results are not always seen at once but are gradual. The tendency is always there. When renewal has begun, man presents a very different picture. He has come under a new influence, received a new nature which conquers the old nature and character. The baptismal regeneration is completed by entire renewal in the spirit of the mind.

B. Renewal of Life. The inward nature must be manifested in outward conduct. This is the essential lesson of this Sunday. Certain evils are to be cast off, and opposite features of good are to be put on. "Put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (1) Falsehood. This is to be replaced by truth. To deceive one's neighbor is to deceive oneself, for it is as if one member of the body deceived another. The word of a Christian is to be as good as his bond, and his bond is his baptism into the body of Christ. (2) Sinful anger. Only such anger is to be endured as is not sinful, that is, on the right occasions, against the right objects, exercised only in a right degree and for the right duration. Anger is a natural remedy against injustice, but undue anger may itself come to be unjust. Unrestrained, it gives room for the devil in the heart and in the Church. (3) Dishonesty. This must be replaced by laborious toil, so that instead of taking from others we may be able to give to others. Happy those whose toil and thrift are so blest as to free them from improper dependence upon others and from the temptation to do wrong by others! (4) Evil language. This must be replaced by words which will bring a blessing and help to others. How beautiful to impart grace by our converse! Sometimes we rather drive it away. (5) Unloving tempers. We have here not only a catalog but a genealogy of bad passions. All such feelings are inconsistent with the presence of the Spirit, with His sensitiveness of holiness and His sensitiveness of love. They are inconsistent

in those who have received forgiveness in Christ, full, free, continually repeated, and wholly undeserved, and should show the like toward others. So should the renewed nature be manifested in renewal of outward life.

OUTLINE FOR SERMON ON THE HOLY GOSPEL

The holy Gospel closely illustrates the doctrine of renewal taught in the Epistle.

A Miracle of Renewal

A. The Need of Renewal. Our state by nature is like that of the palsied, for we are weak in will and principle. Our weakness is, as may be that of palsy, the direct result of sin indulged till we are past feeling, as described in the Epistle. As was the palsied, we are unable to do anything to effect our cure. We must learn our need and prove our sincerity by breaking through every hindrance of prejudice, pride, and inherent shrinking, till we reach the feet of Christ, who alone is the Lord of every disease and can cure the palsied conscience, affections, understanding, and will. When we come so, we shall not be repulsed.

B. Renewal of the Heart. The miracle teaches most clearly (1) the blessing of renewal. It is a blessing more necessary even than the cure of a palsy. Others would have thought that the sick man desired bodily health most of all, but Christ saw deeper into his inward burden and misery and gave the greatest blessing first. (2) The conditions of renewal. These may be learned from this miracle, from which it is plain that Christ will not withhold forgiveness from those who feel their need of it and are more anxious for this blessing than for any other; who seek it from Him and break through every hindrance in order to gain His presence; and who, lastly, desire to be forgiven in order that they may afterward serve more devotedly. These three conditions are, in fact, repentance, which feels our need; faith, which seeks Christ; and obedience, which desires to serve Him. (3) The assurance of renewal. Christ not only forgave the man sick of the palsy but assured him of His forgiveness and bade him to be of good cheer because of it. He desires, therefore, that we should both be forgiven and know this so as to be happy in the knowledge. He has commanded His

Church to convey this blessing to those who have observed its conditions. He has appointed a ministry of reconciliation, whose great object is to announce forgiveness. He has ordained Sacraments, each of which is a channel and seal of forgiveness, for both the water and the blood are for the remission of sins. He gives the assurance of His Word and Spirit to assure our hearts before Him.

C. Renewal of Life. This is symbolized by the command to rise and walk. To walk in newness of life is at once the object and test of renewal. The miracle of healing was the test of Christ's power to forgive sins, for it was impossible to doubt His power to heal the soul when He had so clearly healed the body. So the great test that we have received the invisible benefit must be supplied by the visible tokens of a sanctified and invigorated life.