

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Trinity V
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rmcneely+

For he that will love life and see good days
Let him refrain his tongue from evil and lips that they speak no guile.
Let him eschew evil and do good
Let him seek peace and ensue it

Wisdom from the quill of Saint Peter.

And the lesson for the day.

And his selection as Apostle in the Gospel for the day.

We celebrated the life, work and example of St Peter yesterday,

His saint's day, the day of his martyrdom.

How fitting that we are steeped in his words today.

You've heard me say that the Trinity Season is a Summer Survey
of Essential Christian Doctrine.

A time for us to wander through Christian Thought

For the improvement of our minds and souls.

Today we learn directly from St Peter himself.

In his writings and in his actions.

We have two general Epistles from Peter

We call them general

because they do not seem to be addressed

to a particular person or group.

It is miraculous that they have survived the ages and we have his
words right in our hands.

Peter lived in a time of profound evil.

A time when Christians were hunted and killed

At the hands of Rome.

Peter himself was victim of that evil.

His human response must have been to fight back
To revenge the atrocities.

This is the same Peter who impulsively drew a sword
In the Garden of Gethsemane,
stood between the arresting mob
and Jesus to hold off the arrest. And struck off
the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant.

This is the same Peter who was about to single handedly
take on the entire mob
if Jesus had not stopped him.

This is Peter who knew the rage of anger
Who knew the temptation to do something about it
To retaliate against the murderous Romans.

This is Peter, who knew all about the tension between good and
evil in his life.
He saw it
He lived it.
He felt it.
Every day.

This is Peter who was torn by the battle between good and evil.

This is Peter, who now has a much different
And more powerful message.

In this section of the Epistle, Peter goes to the Psalms for wisdom
Psalm 34 in fact.
A psalm we attribute to David.

David, a warrior of historic proportions
Who wrote the 34th psalm at the end of his military conquests

The message from these men
 These men of action against the evil of their time
 Is surprising.

It is this:
 Do not render evil for evil.
 Do not seek revenge in kind.
 Do not take an eye for an eye as was the law for millennia.

David and Peter say
 Contrariwise: let him that will live good days
 Let him do good
 Seek peace and ensue it. (Pursue peace).
 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open
 to their cries.

We live in evil times.
 Not the evil that Peter knew
 But an evil much more subtle
 And perhaps therefore much more dangerous.
 An evil that attacks invisibly and slowly.
 An evil that has hit the American Family hard
 The very building block of God's plan for creation.
 An evil that has removed God from the Public Discourse
 From institutions
 An evil that has attacked the Church.

Peter and David counsel in the contest,
 the tension between good and evil:
 do that which is good
 That which seeks peace
 Be not afraid of the terror
 Neither be troubled
 But sanctify the Lord God in our hearts.
 That is the defeat of evil.

St Luke's account of Peter's selection as one of the 12 Apostles
Gives us an answer to another kind of tension in our lives.

The tension between faith and rationality.
You see it in play in this scene at the Sea of Galilee.

Peter and the others had finished a toilsome night of fishing
That was frustrated by the fact that all their work
Was for nothing.
They fished at night, rowing the heavy boat
Casting, pulling in and re-casting the water soaked nets.
They worked themselves to the bone but had caught no fish.
They were exhausted.

We can picture Peter, bronzed by the sun
His hands gnarled by the calluses burned into them
By the ropes, the nets, the oars of his trade.

It is hot under the Galilean Sun
Peter smells of the fish that are his trade
His sweat soaked clothes stick to him

But after a full night's work he is only almost done
he must still care for the nets that catch the fish
They must be mended and hung to dry for tonight's work.
Just as they are finishing their toil
This itinerant preacher asks to use their boat
As a platform from which to preach
Because the crowds have pressed in to the shallow water at
the shore.

Peter relents and lets Jesus use his boat

When Jesus has finished His sermon

He seeks to reward the fishermen who have generously loaned their boat

And suggests they let down their nets one more time.

Peter reacts and almost snaps at our Lord,

Calling Him Master,

Peter says, look here,

We have been out all night long

And caught nothing.

Leave us who know our trade. There are no fish to bring in.

Peter is rational, if just a bit irritable,
on edge.

Maybe perturbed by the suggestion.

In his mind, he knows his trade

He knows to a certainty that if the fish had risen

He would have caught them

Everything he knows factually, objectively and intellectually

Tells him: there are no fish.

He and the others are exhausted.

The last thing he wants to do is to reload the nets

Cast them into the sea, especially near the shore

And have to repeat the work that he knows will

Yield nothing.

To prove to this unusual man

That there are no fish.

But herein lies the struggle, the tension.

There is something about this priest.

Something his mind cannot fully grasp.

Something nagging in his heart.

A seed of faith was kindled and began to flame.

Peter paused

He pondered it

Everything he knew was true, was clear and right before him.
So why was he doubting it?

He struggled with the tension between mind and heart
 Between rational thought
 And growing faith.

The same struggle that we all encounter at times in our lives.
We can't deny the logic of facts and rational thought
But neither can we deny the faith that disputes it.

Peter drags the heavy nets to the boat again
 He shoves off
 And casts them as Jesus has suggested
And there is this miraculous draft of fish
 So great that it threatens to break his equipment
 Swamp his boat.
 He shouts to John and James to help bring in the catch.
 It fills both boats to overflowing.

Peter's faith is redeemed.
And the ember flames to life, a raging fire.
 He forsakes all
 The miraculous catch
 The boats, the nets, everything
 And fatefully follows Jesus for three years
 to a martyr's death.
He becomes a fisher of men, as Jesus had proclaimed.

The lesson for us is this:
There will be times on our journey to God
 When we will face the contest between mind and heart
 Between the world as our eyes see it
 And the world as we see it through faith

In those times remember Peter
and his first encounter with our Lord.
Recall his choice
And the consequence of it.

And so as we leave this little miracle church building this morning
With the written wisdom of Peter
and the example of Peter
In the sorting out of the tensions playing upon our lives these days:

Let us recall Peter's writing;
Let us eschew evil and do good
Seek peace and ensue it.
Let us recall his example;
Follow our faith.