

St Thomas and St Thomas of the Air Church
 Fourth Sunday After Easter
 May 3, 2026
 rmceely+

“...sundry and manifold changes of the world”

“with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning”

“filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness”

*“receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save
 your souls.”*

Phrases from the Collect and Epistle for today.

My, Couldn't the Elizabethans turn a phrase.

Perhaps at first blush

there may be no obvious relationship among these phrases, but,
 perhaps in them we may find instruction for our lives.

We live in a broken and fallen world.

Our society is becoming secularized
 at an ever increasing pace.

We live in a culture of filthiness
 and a superfluity of naughtiness.

It is a challenge these days
 to retain our faith in the
 sundry and manifold changes of the world.

Today an invisible microscopic cell
 A virus

History is something we live every day

but which can only be seen from the distance of years.

We think of ours as a life of changeable times
 and they are,

But lest we feel that we suffer alone
or that ours is a new phenomenon;
for comparison,
let me tell you some of what an earlier generation
experienced in their lifetime:
Let me tell you something of the story of my Grandmother.

She was born in 1891 and lived just short of 90 years.

During her lifetime:

Transportation went from dirt roads and horse drawn wagons to
concrete freeways and gasoline-powered cars and giant trucks

Aviation went from the very first powered flight at Kitty Hawk to
men walking on the moon

First Radio and then television dawned and radically changed
everything

She saw and suffered the loss of two world wars
And two Asian Wars

Four presidents died in office

Prohibition came and went

Income tax came and then exploded

Women voted for the first time in these United States
and went from home bound child raisers
and domestic chores
to all the professions and heads of commerce

By some estimates, a virus killed almost a third of the planet

The Constitution of the United States was amended 9 times

Victorian morality gave way to vulgarity and wantonness

Laws that mandated racial segregation were stuck down
and civil rights took their place

A young widow at 38, She brought 5 children
And a terminally ill husband
through the Great Depression of the 30s

As a child, she literally lived in the Church with her father the
rector and her mother.

As a girl, she had known of personal acts of charity
to friends,
family
and to complete strangers.
The Church was the safety net.

But during her lifetime, that life of giving,
was replaced by a cold, giant
federal and state
bureaucracy
that became a very poor substitute
for her individual and personal acts
of Christian charity.

During her lifetime, even her beloved Episcopal Church,
the church of her priest father
and her priest grand father,
was heretically altered.

The point is not that these changes were all good
or that they were all bad for her.

It is that historians may someday say that no generation in the history of man saw more
 fundamental
 life shattering
 change than did my Grandmother's.

It is difficult to imagine any aspect of her life that was not rocked by the *sundry and manifold changes of the world*, in the span of her life.

But through all these changes my grandmother remained steadfastly a woman of God. Since her death I have wondered how she did it.

With the winds of change howling through every aspect of her life, however did she do it?

How in the world did she keep her focus?
 what did my Grandmother have
 and what to we have to cling to?

What was there in her life
 and what is there in our lives,
 that is a refuge,
 an anchor
 that we can absolutely rely upon
 to keep us from being swept away and destroyed by the
sundry and manifold changes of the world ?

A recent New York Times article concluded
 that in the current generation of American young people
 (Gen Z),
 there is a hunger for orthodox religion,
 a desire for something meaningful
 solid and permanent in their lives.
 Perhaps in response to

the evaporative, thinly transparent and desultory
 woke culture
 Upon which they were raised.

Consider St James and today's Epistle (which I must say is the
 delight of all lay readers)

*"... (the) perfect gift from above . . . with whom (there is) no
 variableness, nor shadow of turning. . . Wherefore, lay apart all
 filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with meekness
 the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."*

The engrafted word of God that is able to save our souls.
 The Engrafted word.

In St John's Gospel for today,
 Jesus himself expands upon what we know
 as the engrafted word
 in his final discourse to the apostles
 gathered in the upper room
 on the night in which He was betrayed:

*"... I will send Him (the comforter, the Spirit of Truth) unto you.
 He will guide you into all truth and He shall take of mine and show
 it unto you"*.

Now, my Grandmother had something of an advantage over us,
 she was the daughter and grand daughter
 of fine priests
 and she was literally raised in the church,
 living in the rectory in her formative years.

But, we too have the gifts of God,
 as St James reminds us in today's epistle.
 Gifts in which there is no variableness
 Gifts with not even a shadow of turning

Gifts which are the rock,
the anchor to which we can hold
and withstand a hurricane of change.
We have the Holy Spirit engrafted in each of us.
The Holy Spirit who will take from Our Lord and show it
unto us.

Sometimes in the din of this broken world
We must be still
and know that He is God,
in order to hear His voice
We have scripture, the inspired word of God.

Here in San Francisco
Perhaps the world capital of our fallen world
With the moral decay eroding our brethren
And institutions around us
We can feel isolated and alone;
Feel that we are the only ones left
To stand up for the moral code of God
But we are not alone.

Without knowing it, or thinking about it
The love of God
So alive in the people and children of God
Spreads and grows each year.
No. We are not alone.

As the seeds of world war were sprouting in Europe in 1936, T.S.
Eliot wrote the words that Archbishop Morse posted on the
Seminary Chapel for all of Berkeley to read:

“The Universal Church is today, it seems to me,

more definitely set against the world
 than at any time since pagan Rome.
 I do not mean that our times are particularly corrupt,
 all times are corrupt.
 In spite of certain local appearances,
 Christianity is not
 and cannot be within measurable time, "official".
 The world is trying the experiment of attempting to form
 a civilized
 but non-Christian mentality.
 The experiment will fail;
 but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse;
 meanwhile redeeming the time:
 so that the Faith may be preserved alive
 through the dark ages before us;
 to renew
 and rebuild civilization,
 and save the World from suicide."

So on this beautiful
 Spring San Francisco
 Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Wyoming, New York,
 Virginia and North Carolina morning;
 as we concern ourselves with the prospect of the specter
 of the sundry and manifold changes of the world

Hear the words of Thomas Cramner in today's Collect
 Hear the words of St James in today's Epistle
 "The Father of lights with whom is no
 Variableness neither shadow of turning."
 And
 "Receive with meekness the engrafted word
 Which is able to save your souls."

Hear the words of TS Eliot;

Hear the words of the Son of God:
“When he the spirit of truth is come
He will guide you into all truth”

And as we suffer the manifold changes of the world
Know this:

We have the Church.
Its sacraments
Its doctrine
Its guidance
 Proven over centuries of change
And unlike some of our brethren,
We have Anglican doctrine in APCK
Which will not change
to fit our passing political or social opinions.
Rather,
 our lives change
 to conform to God’s commandments.

All of this
 and more
 are gifts from God to keep us focused.
All of it points us toward our incarnate Lord, Jesus Christ.

So when the winds of change
 howl through our lives
 as they inevitably will
We have only to grasp onto
 The rock
 The anchor of our soul.

The engrafted word of God
The Holy Spirit indwelling in us
Seek refuge in the Church
And it will all point us to our Lord.

As the winds of change knock us down
 We will rise up again
 As glorious children of God
Firm in our faith
 and ever emboldened
 in our belief
On that narrow pathway to God
 And to life everlasting.

