

ALL THINGS COME OF THEE
A Sermon for the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, 2011
On the Text: Propers for the Day
By the Reverend Doctor Randolph Constantine

Today is the 14th Sunday after Trinity. It says so right there on the Bulletin. Last Sunday, the 13th Sunday after Trinity, I told you of how the Reverends Melville Scott and Fred H. Lindemann describe the Trinity season as having two parts, and of how the 13th Sunday after Trinity is the first Sunday of the second part of the season, and that the second part of the season is concerned with many of the aspects of the Christian life. Last Sunday was about Love: Love in a covenant relationship with God and with our fellow man. Today, the theme is Purity: Purity in our lives, of heart and mind and soul, to which both the Epistle and the Gospel lessons speak directly. A funny thing is that the Collect for today does not even mention Purity directly, and neither does the OT lesson.; but it is there, hiding not very deeply.

Recently, much of my reading has been about the Christian life; and it hasn't spoken to me very much, if at all, about Purity either, at least not directly. However, there is one little bit in the OT lesson that also doesn't speak directly about Purity either; but when you consider all of its implications, you can see that that is where it will lead you.

On those Sundays on which we have a service of Holy Communion, the offering is taken up immediately after the sermon as is indicated in the rubric at the bottom of page 71 of the 1928 Prayer Book. I sometimes wonder if because of that some of you might wish that I would preach even longer sermons. Actually, I don't really wonder that. That is just a lame joke to get you thinking about the offering and what we do when we take it up and present it.

The rubric on page 71 of your 1928 PB does not specify who is to sing what, when, and what Bible verse or verses are to be said when making the presentation of the offering. However, there is a long tradition behind what we do each Sunday. We do not have a choir, so the congregation sings a hymn while the offering is being taken up, and a Presbyter or Deacon prepares the elements for the Eucharist. When the Offertory Hymn is over and the minister has prepared the elements and received the offering, he presents it to God with King David's words that we heard in the OT lesson this morning, "[All things come of Thee \[, O Lord\], and of Thine Own have we given Thee.](#)" That is also the way it was done in the Episcopal Church I grew up in, in the 1940s, and with those same words, even though they are not found in the 1928 PB.

I have no idea when ministers began using David's words when presenting the offering because those words are not specified in either the 1928 or the 1892 Prayer Books. They are also not given in the 1662 PB of the Church of England, which is still the official PB of the CoE. However, David's words do appear and are specified for possible use in the Reformed Episcopal Church's PBs of 1932 and 2005. In the REC PB, the controlling rubric says something slightly different from the 1928 PB: "The Offering of the Congregation having been gathered, it may be dedicated to the Lord in these words following (that's David's words), or the Long Meter Doxology, or other suitable words, said or sung."

Anglicans have been using David's words for the presentation of the offering for a long time. It is just that it seems that we, the REC, were the first to put them into our formal liturgy. This may be a neat thing to know in a game of Anglican Trivial Pursuit, but there is more to it than that. It dawned on me this week that David said more in those few words than perhaps he knew he was saying. Then again, he may have been fully aware of what he was saying. The full quote, as David said it, is part of a prayer of blessing that David prays at a great gathering, the beginning of which is described at the beginning of the 28th chapter of First Chronicles. At this meeting, David reveals his desire to build a Temple for the Lord in Jerusalem and that God had told him that he would not be allowed to do that because he was a man of war and had shed blood, that he must leave the building of the Temple to Solomon, whom God had chosen to be king after him. David turns over the plans of the Temple to Solomon that include the massive amounts of gold, silver, bronze, and iron that are to be used. The beginning of chapter 29, from which our OT lesson is taken, tells of the amounts collected from the leaders as well as from David. The amount David gave in gold alone, 3000 talents, would be worth more than 6 billion dollars in today's money; while the collection of gold from the leaders amounted to 5000 talents worth more than 10 billion dollars. This did not include the amounts of silver, bronze, and iron. All that is in the first 9 verses of chapter 29. Our lesson begins with David's prayer, praising and blessing God: 1 Chronicles 29:10-14 10 Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. 11 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give

strength unto all. 13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. 14 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

Here, David has used these words to present to God what is probably the greatest single offering of gold and other goods that has ever been given to God. What's more is that he also recognizes that all they were really doing was giving back to God what was already His in the first place; as David said in verse 11: *for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.*

David kept using that pesky word, ALL; and he used it as if he really meant it – all, ALL, everything that is heaven and earth is God's, even our souls and bodies, because while we might think that we get to decide what we might do with our minds, souls, and bodies, it is God, Who, in the end, on the Last Day, will decide the ultimate fate of those things.

We are His, as is everything else on this earth, and we are tainted with the sin of Adam. Why then would God want us? Because He created us to be His people, and it was for that reason that He sent His Son to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption, that we might be washed in His Blood and come to worship Him. God has no need of gold and silver. He could create an entire universe made of either one if He wanted to. No, He wanted a people made in His image – capable of independent thought – to enjoy Him and worship Him.

Is there anything God does not already have? Yes, the Collect last Sunday told us what it is, the only gift we can really give Him, *“true and laudable service”* – worship, obeying His commandments, being willing to give to His church the fruits of our labors, as did David and the children of Israel for the building of the Temple.

There is another place in the Bible where that word, *all*, shows up, and in a way that may seem to give us some problems. Depending on the translation, *all* may appear as *every*, but in the ESV pew Bible, we have: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 *18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* The meaning is the same whether it says, *“in all circumstances”*, *“in all things”*, or *“in everything”*. The verse that immediately precedes this one, 5:17, is usually translated as *“Pray without ceasing.”* (ESV, KJV), but it could be translated, *“Pray continually”* (NIV), *“Pray constantly:”* (HCSB, RSV), or even *“Pray all the time.”* These two verses tell us how we can begin to give to God that *“true and laudable”* service: Pray, and in our prayers, Give thanks; and we need to try to cultivate this as a habit, as something we do all

the time. That passage in 1 Thessalonians 5, from verse 11 through 23 is a prescription for how the Christian life should be lived, in contrast to how St. Paul tells us it should **not** be lived in today's Epistle lesson, the contrast between Purity and Impurity.

I have a "sticky note" pasted above my computer screen that says four things: "Pray, before you do anything, Pray!; While you are doing it, Pray!; When you have finished it, Pray!; and finally, verses 17 and 18 of First Thessalonians 5: Pray without ceasing; in all things give thanks. Do I always manage to do this all the time? Unfortunately, no. I am just as flawed as anybody else; but the times when I do glance up and look at that note and pray before starting something, such as a sermon, I find that it usually comes out better than those times when I just forge ahead without pausing to pray.

Where does this desire to pray come from? From God. Where does our faith come from? From God, as we are told in Ephesians 2:8-9 **8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.** Our salvation and faith are gifts of grace that come from, where else, God.

When David said, "All things come of Thee" he did not put any qualification on "things". Now, I do not know Hebrew, and none of the commentaries I have say anything about whether the word David used for "things" meant only material things or "things" such as life itself and love and even sickness and aging and many other immaterial "things". Whatever is the case, there is one "thing", if we can call it a *thing*, that did not come from God; and that is sin and its relative, evil. However, sin and evil are not things even in the sense that a "gentle rain" or a "good harvest" are things. Only good things come from God, but we must remember that only He is the judge of what is good and what is bad.

The things that God has given us, Faith and Grace, are what instill in us the desire to come together each Sunday to worship Him. Our worship consists of prayers of praise and thanksgiving, giving thanks as did only one of the ten lepers Jesus healed. We pray for repentance and absolution. We make requests for grace that we may grow each day, becoming more like His Son Jesus Christ. We keep his commandments by celebrating His Holy Eucharist as Jesus told us to do. We pray that this world of tumult will come to know the Peace of God even as we know that Scripture tells us that there are likely to be more and worse wars before the Last Day.

What we do in that service cannot be restricted to just an hour or so on Sunday morning. We have to learn how to really pray without ceasing, to have a conversation with God all through the

day. If we try to do that, and then listen carefully, we shall begin to understand God's replies. We shall learn the truth of King David's words: "All things come of Thee, and of thine own have we given Thee" in regard to physical things; and we shall come to realize that we do have something to give God that is not something physical, but is rather from our hearts: our worship and our love, our true and laudable service.

AMEN