

TO HAVE A QUIET MIND  
A Sermon for the 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity, 2011  
On the Text: Propers for the Day  
By the Reverend Doctor Randolph Constantine

Today we have what might seem to be contrast between the theme of the Collect for today and our most recent national holiday of Veterans' Day on Friday. Today's Collect is one of the shorter ones, but it asks a lot from God in those few words. Pray along with me as I read it again: *Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people, pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

What do we ask here, and why? Why? In order to pray this prayer, don't we have to presume that we are some of God's faithful people? So, presuming to be members of the family of God's faithful people, we ask Him to grant us "pardon and peace". Pardon is very much a different thing from peace, but peace can come from pardon. When God pardons us of our sins, He not only forgives us, but He remits, that is, He sets aside, He foregoes, any punishment that He might have given us, punishment that we really deserved. Because we know that God has promised us forgiveness of our sins and the remission of all punishment because His Son, Jesus Christ took that punishment in our place, should not only give us peace of mind, but should also fill us with the deepest possible sense of thankfulness. And so, cleansed of our sins, we should have a quiet mind in all that we do, so that we shall serve the Lord with gladness.

Rev. Melville Scott thought of the 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity as a day devoted to the idea of Peace. Fred H. Lindemann thought of it as a day devoted to the idea of service. I think we can see that it is both. What's more, each of them, Peace and Service, feeds off the other in what an engineer might call, "a positive feedback loop". As we grow in service to God, a sense of peace and joy grows within us, which in turn leads us to want to serve Him even more.

What does it mean for a person to serve God? I think I answered that in a sermon a few weeks ago, but I think it is worth repeating. In St. Matthew 4, we have the story of Jesus' being tempted by Satan. In my sermon to you just 6 weeks ago on the 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, I described the second temptation this way: "While Jesus was being tempted by Satan, His reply to Satan when Satan asked Jesus to worship him was this: Matthew 4:10 10 Then saith Jesus unto him, **Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.** What Jesus did here was to quote what Moses said in Deuteronomy 6:13. The service He is talking about here is worship. We must love God and honor Him. That is precisely what is meant by the Summary of the Law that we use at the beginning of many services of Holy Communion. It is what Jesus said in response to the question put to him by a lawyer who was also a Pharisee in Matthew 22:35-40

35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, 36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37 Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.**

When we truly love God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind, then we offer him praise and thanksgiving in all things; and we obey His commandments. My answer to you on the 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity as to what we have to offer God, was simply, "**true and laudable service**"; and that is because there is really nothing that God lacks except our love. How can He lack that? Because He made us in His image, as beings who have a certain amount of free will, enough so that we can reject His love for us in favor of the things of the world and the lusts of the flesh.

And what of this world? Maybe the best that can be said is that the world is a mess. Why should we want what it has to offer. There are dictators here and there fighting each other and the people of their own countries. There are people in this country who can't seem to decide whether they want to protest because it is fun to do so or because it is an opportunity to engage in criminal activity behind a smokescreen of what is supposed to be constitutionally protected "peaceable assembly", when truly, "There is no peace."

And in the midst of this, we have Veterans' Day, a holiday to honor all those who have ever served in this country's Armed Services, not just those who gave their lives while in the service of this country; it is for them that we have Memorial Day. In England, November the 11<sup>th</sup> is called Remembrance Day and is their Memorial Day. I don't know if they have the equivalent of our Veteran's Day.

A few years ago, it was estimated that the number of veterans and those on active duty comprised about 10 per cent of the population of the USA. Are you aware that of the men of this congregation, the percentage is either close to or is equal to 100 per cent. There may be someone I have missed. I don't know if any of our women have ever served in the military, but even if they did not, their service at home can never be discounted. During World War 2 we heard a lot about "the Home Front", and much invaluable service was done there by both men and women who never wore Olive Drab, or Navy Blue, or Marine Green. there was a saying then that was not meant derisively: They also serve who only stand and wait. However, this weekend, we honor those who served in our country's Armed Forces. It is meet and right so to do.

What does this have to do with what we prayed for in the Collect? Everything. Our military prefers to be a force for peace and not a force for war. The object is for the Armed Forces of the United States to be so strong that no one will want to go to war with us. For the most part, that

has been the case. Unfortunately, sometimes war is forced upon us. At other times, for political reasons, misguided politicians misuse the military for some purpose that detracts from their true purpose; and that may end up getting us entangled in a conflict that was not envisioned. Using a sword to toast marshmallows may work, but ends up causing the sword to lose its temper and thus to become useless. Those with clear vision see that the military are used properly, with peace being the end in view. We honor the living as well as the dead, and those honored dead include any who ever served and died in old age without ever lifting a weapon in a battle.

The same words keep coming up in both situations: with respect to God and with respect to Country: Serve, Service, Peace, Quiet. In our Propers today, the Psalm and the Lessons, we read images of peace everywhere. The Psalm, 91, is a psalm of Peace and of prophecy, a psalm to give peace of mind, to know that God will protect you, as in verses 4-6: [4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; 6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.](#) And later, in the last three verses, we have the promise of salvation: [14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. 15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. 16 With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.](#) In this promise we are told that deliverance comes from love of God and from knowing God, which is what is meant by, [“because he hath known my name.”](#)

In the First Lesson, Moses is concerned that God will abandon the Children of Israel in the desert, and he beseeches God to keep His presence with them. God promises not only to stay with them, but to “give them rest”; and He promises this because He, God, has found Moses

worthy of grace and that He knows Moses' name. The second lesson from Hebrews continues the image of being granted God's rest if they will only listen to His word and not harden their hearts. God's rest – rest from the labors of the world – will be found in the salvation that comes from faith in Jesus Christ. This short Lesson from Hebrews does not mention Jesus; however, He is the subject of the very next verse where we read the famous verse: Hebrews 4:14 [14](#) [Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.](#) What follows this in the Epistle to the Hebrews goes into the process by which a person obtains that salvation promised in the Psalm, but it is all pointed towards that rest in God, which is the ultimate Peace.

That is the peace that is defended by the word of God that is sharper than any two-edged sword of verse 12. Other lessons for today use even more military images, which as in Isaiah 59, which includes a forerunner of the description of the whole armor of God described in Ephesians 6: 11 – 17. Even there, when wearing that whole armor, the basic use is defensive, defense against evil, although the word of God as a sword is part of the Christian's armament.

The pardon and peace we ask for in the Collect are obtained by faith, by loving God, and confessing our sins, which God is quick to forgive if we are contrite and honest in our confession. When we are cleansed of our sins; our minds are quiet; and we are at peace and are thus more able to serve God and grow in His love and service. I pray we may all come to be of quiet minds.

AMEN!