



The First Sunday after Christmas Day.

The Collect.

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

1 And Job answered and said, 2 No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. 3 But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? 4 I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn. 5 He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease. 6 The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly. 7 But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: 8 Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. 9 Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? 10 In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. 11 Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat? 12 With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding. 13 With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding. 14 Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. 15 Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. 16 With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. 17 He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. 18 He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. 19 He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. 20 He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. 21 He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. 22 He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. 23 He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. 24 He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. 25 They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh

them to stagger like a drunken man. (Job 12:1-25)

A great man will not abide foolish words without challenge. Job, though subject to the same human frailties of us all, is a great example to us of perseverance under stress and duress. As the captain of a great Man-of-War would do, Job will now marshal all hands on board, and bring all guns to flank position, and bring them to bear on the target at hand. Though he may not fully comprehend the reasons for his predicament, he nonetheless knows that there is a God in Heaven. Despite his weakness in the face of severe troubles, he has no doubt God has all power and all knowledge. He describes with majestic language the greatness and beauty of God and his Creation. Such beauty of expression is rare in coming from lips oppressed and tortured, and is evidence of greatness of character and faith. Even when hard pressed, if we remember the greatness and compassion of God, we will be strengthened and encouraged. He will not suffer his people to bear pain endlessly and without reason. In spite of his fears and doubts, Job remembers this. He is a fine specimen of the patriot of Heaven.

A wise man will recognize arrogance and pride in others even before its head has been reared. Job's friends, like many modern know-it-alls in science and religion, have gone a bridge too far in their judgmental and unfair indictment of Job. ***No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.*** I love the smooth reference to snidely pride given here by Job to his friends. They are so full of wisdom, and the sole proprietors of it, that they will carry all knowledge and wisdom of man to their graves. I like it!

But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn. Here is food for thought for the modern mind: In ancient times, and even the ancient times of my youth, there was a general knowledge, among the population, of God – His righteousness, His justice, His Law, and His nature. These are qualities that Job's friends, though unfairly, have shared with Job. Who today uses such Godly words of counsel in advising a friend? But a friend is one to whom we turn when the whole nation may turn against us. If that friend to whom we turn condemns us as well, to whom do we turn? Why, we turn to that friend that sticketh closer than a brother, right? The author of the renowned historical classic, *History of the Reformation*, M. D'Aubigne, was once reproached by Henri IV of France for continuing his friendship for M. de la Tremouille, who had recently been banished from court. D'Aubigne replied--"As M. de la Tremouille is so unfortunate as to have lost the confidence of his master, he may well be allowed to retain that of his friend." Would it not have been fitting that the friends of Job had considered this principle? It is not only the knowledge of the Holy that is important, but also how it is applied. The devil knows Holy things as well, but he uses them to destroy the Holy people of God. It is true that the righteous, from Noah to John and Betty Stam, missionary martyrs in China, have been laughed to scorn in their humble desires to love and help others. You may count on it: the scornful tongue shall be turned from scorn to wailing.

It is true that those who live in ease have few questions, while those who live in misery have few answers. Job will now turn the words of his accusers back upon them as a herd of deer spotlighted in the open field. He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease. Job sets his light to high-beam, and proceeds to reveal the provincial attitudes expressed by his 'friends'. It is no secret that the devil hates light. If he is after you, which he always is, shine the bright Light of God's Word in his face and he will flee. "**Get behind me, Satan!**" is a fine remedy!

The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly. The American, and world, landscape are abundantly supplied with "tabernacles of robbers" that prosper more than the tabernacles of the righteous – seemingly. The visible treasures of gold and silver are apparent while the hidden treasures on deposit in Heaven are hidden from eye. God will usually provide us with that for which the heart yearns above all. If it is the dust and dirt of the world, we shall have it in abundance. But gold will enjoy no currency in Hell.

We have many sophisticates of science and social prominence who know less of real science than the beasts of the field. Ironic, is it not? But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. It is an amazing wonder that men believe that they can define the God of natural law through their own worldly experimentations. They question that there is a God, even, when all of the evidence is in them, around them, and in the very air they breathe. *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things* (Romans 1:19-23) The fish of the sea will inform us if we lack an understanding of God and His Creation. So will the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and even the earth itself whose orbit is so perfectly devised as to be precise in its maintenance of life from the Sun. Our SUN is God!

Who is so foolish to believe that man 'evolved' from lower forms such as apes, monkeys, and chimpanzees. The only evidence of this science might be the brazenly ignorant and goateed professor standing before the biology class. They claim that the evolutionary process is continuous. This nails the last plug in their coffin. If ongoing, where are the transition forms today between monkeys and man? Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. The scientist takes breath for granted until his Maker withholds his last breath. At that moment, too late, the scientist remembers the value of life and breath and the God who made it. Job mentions the Hand of God. Do we forget that our

mortal lives are in His Mighty Hand moment by moment? And what a glorious thought. The One whose eye is on the sparrow, values us far above sparrows. It is a comfort to the Elect, unknown to the lost, to know that our final rest will be at God's Hand. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.* (Psalms 31:5)

Can our ears not hear with understanding? Who made this intricate organ for our benefit? Do our mouths not savor the sweet taste of meats? Who made it so that our labors of eating would not be a chore, but an edification? Do not our marvelous minds accumulate large stores of knowledge and wisdom over time? Why does the modern mind resent the wisdom of the elders? It is perhaps so because wisdom comes from God – the source of all righteousness and wisdom – and this reviles the spirit of licentiousness of the modern mind. *Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat? With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding. With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding.* Is not wisdom stood on its head by the modern mind which venerates youth and despises wisdom of the aged? When events are not as we think they should be, the world seems to us 'turned upside down.' When the combined armies of American and French forces defeated the British under General Cornwallis at Yorktown, General Cornwallis sent General O'Hara in his stead to surrender. Cornwallis feigned illness rather than surrender to an 'inferior' people who had just given him a good switching. O'Hara first appealed to the French Comte de Rochambeau to receive his surrender rather than lose face by surrendering to the 'country-bumpkins' under Washington. Rochambeau refused, so General O'Hara surrendered to General Lincoln (a subordinate of Washington) while the British band played, "The World Turned Upside Down." Of course, among the most ancient is most wisdom, and the Lord is the Ancient of Days – hear ye Him!

Whatever dreams are erased by the Hand of God are erased forever, and whatever dream He creates in the heart of man shall come to fruition – is it not so? *Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his.* The puny charms and claims will not free him from the justice of God. He, too, belongs to God as do the beast of the field – without blessed souls.

He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. The discordant voices and cacophony of devils cannot withstand His withering fires. Even those dark secrets that linger in the shadows of death, He brings to light. Though the Light Brigade at Balaclava brought great glory to the British colors in their sacrificial attack, they brought light out of darkness to a world that yearned for men of courage in the cause of right. Their rallying cry was to redress the

blood of women and children crying from the dust. That kind of Light Brigade is nothing compared to the True Light Brigade of Christ.

There was a beloved Country and Land of Liberty whose destiny has turned from abundance to ashes. May God shed His Light again in this fair land to restore the hearts and minds of her people to the God of their fathers. America would do well to heed the next words of Job: *He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.* These last sentences strike dismay into my heart – dismay mingled with righteous indignation for the knavery that has taken over our land. The heart of the chief of our people has been taken away and we wander, as drunken men, in darkness. Remember, America, we are the ones whose hands have done evil and exalted the wicked! Shall the Holy Spirit move, once more, upon the face of the waters of our Land and speak the words of restoration: *And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light* (Gen 1:2-3)