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## THE SECOND WORD

ON this second Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection – the first after Easter – we hear the Father's answer to his Son's Second Word from the Cross. Among the crowd around the cross "who know not what they do" there are two thieves, crucified with Jesus. One of them in the blindness of cynical despair "railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:39-43). The thievery condemned at the cross, is that which cast us out of paradise, the theft of Adam at the tree, his proud grasping after the prerogatives of God. In wonderful exchange, Jesus, the one "who hath done nothing amiss", took our condemnation upon himself, and to all penitent thieves he opened the way to paradise, the spiritual garden made fruitful by the purifying water and blood that streamed from his stricken side. Now vindicated by his resurrection, he comes among his apostles, declaring to them the peace of paradise, and commissioning them to share that peace by the remission of sins (gospel lesson). He who "died for our sins, has risen again for our justification" (collect). In receiving their word of witness with repentance and faith, we too "pass over" from condemnation to justification, from spiritual death – our ancient thievery and guile - to spiritual life (epistle lesson), in which new life we must learn to live "without guile" and theft: "As new-born babes, alleluia: desire without guile the spiritual milk [of the word], alleluia, alleluia." (Introit. 1 Peter 2:2; Psalm 33. Quasimodo.)

**The Rev'd Gavin G. Dunbar**

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