

Notes for Next Sunday

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4). Little is known about Habakkuk except that he was a contemporary of Jeremiah and a man of vigorous faith rooted deeply in the religious traditions of Israel. He receives an oracle from God. Oracles were frequently received in visions. The Hebrew word for "oracle" (possibly meaning "burden," but perhaps only "pronouncement") often refers to revelations containing warnings of impending. After complaining to God about the terrible behavior of Judah, God tells Habakkuk that at the appointed time Judah will be led into captivity in Babylon.

Epistle (2 Timothy 1:1-14). Paul takes this time to encourage Timothy. He begins by telling Timothy that he, Paul, thanks God for Timothy and that Timothy is always in Paul's prayers. This is one of the greatest encouragements that one human being can offer another. Another encouraging word is that Paul reminds Timothy of that faith he has living in him and how valuable that can be for Timothy's ministry. He follows that up with urging Timothy not be timid but be bold and continue to be a powerful witness.

Gospel (Luke 17:1-10). This is the final passage in a long discourse that seems to begin at 14:25. There are four sayings of Jesus in this text. They continue Jesus' teaching on discipleship and instructions to the disciples concerning their future leadership in the church. They have a certain unity and are also a fitting interlude in Luke's continuing narrative about God's merciful order as it is reflected in the kingdom.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received. ²How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? ³Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. ⁴Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

The prophet is deeply troubled because God seems to tolerate iniquity and wrong—things such as destruction, violence, strife, and contention—and does nothing about it. Sin and its results abound in the land. Habakkuk echoes the sentiments of many faithful people of God who wonder why God does not deal immediately and directly with the evil that surrounds them (cf Ps 73; Jer 12:1). (TLSB)

I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

2:1 I will stand at my watch. in humility and patience, Habakkuk now quietly waits for God to answer the questions he has raised and cannot himself answer. (TLSB)

² Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. ³For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. ⁴"See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright— but the righteous will live by his faith

2:3 appointed time. The vision imparted to Habakkuk points forward to the completion, or fulfillment, of God's purpose at a time set by Him. (TLSB)

2:3 *wait for it*. The following message deals with the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C., about 66 years after Habakkuk's prophecy. The Lord tells Habakkuk (and Judah) that fulfillment of the prophecy may "linger," but that he and the people are to expect it (see 3:16). (CSB)

Waiting for the Lord is an act of faith and hope (Ps 33:20–22). This is an esp important exhortation for people in modern times, when the desire for immediate satisfaction breeds impatience and irritability.

2:4 *is puffed up*. Hebrew means "to swell" (as a tumor), a vivid picture of bloated pride. Luther described such a person as having "stuffed ears" for refusing to believe God's vision (AE 19:123). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 2 Timothy 1:1-14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, ²To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. ⁴Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. ⁶For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. ⁸So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, ⁹who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. ¹²That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. ¹³What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

1:4 Recalling your tears. Paul had a very close personal relationship to Timothy who was his spiritual son. The last time they saw each other there were tears, now he is looking forward to the joy of seeing him again. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

1:5 your grandmother Lois ... your mother Eunice. Timothy's mother and grandmother, both of them Christian, taught Timothy the Christian faith from infancy (cf 3:14–15). They passed the faith to Timothy by reading and speaking the Word to him. Both names are Greek, not Jewish, indicating three generations of Greek cultural influence in the family. (TLSB)

1:6 fan into flame the gift of God. Gifts are not given in full bloom; they need to be developed through use. (CSB)

1:7 God did not give us a spirit of timidity. Not the Holy Spirit, but Timothy's pastoral aptitude, which apparently lacked confidence. (TLSB)

1:9 called us to a holy calling. Though Paul may be speaking primarily about the pastoral office that he and Timothy shared, his reference to "a holy calling" applies to all who live by faith. A Christian's daily work is indeed a holy calling and a priestly work because of God's gift of faith. Christian holiness is not rooted in what we do, but in God's work for us and through us in Christ. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Luke 17:1-10

Jesus said to his disciples: “Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come.² It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.³ So watch yourselves. “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.⁴ If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”⁶ He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.⁷ “Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? ⁸ Would he not rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? ⁹ Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”

17:2 one of these little ones. Leading esp a young or immature believer to fall away from Christ. Even infants can believe or trust (cf 18:15), as shown by the way they long to be held by parents rather than by strangers. (TLSB)

17:3 watch yourself. Each one bears responsibility for guiding the brother away from sin and for being ready to forgive. (TLSB)

17:3 rebuke. Drawing attention to the sin is a loving warning. “Necessity requires one to speak of the evil, to prefer charges, to investigate, and to testify.... Governments, father and mother, brothers and sisters, and other good friends are under obligation to one another to rebuke evil wherever it is needful and profitable” (LC I 274–75). (TLSB)

17:4 seven times. Keep forgiving, as God likewise forgives you. Augustine: “What then is ‘seven times’? Always, as often as he shall sin and repent” (NPNF 1 6:452). (TLSB)

17:5 Increase our faith! The disciples see they are unable to live up to the teaching of Jesus. The Lord shows that faith is a quality more than a measured quantity. (TLSB)

17:10 we are unworthy servants. Perfect service is a reasonable return to our Master, who deals mercifully with us and calls us to deal mercifully with others (vv 3–4). “These words clearly declare that God saves by mercy and because of His promise, not that it is due because of the value of our works” (Ap V 213). (TLSB)