

Notes for Next Sunday

Fifth Sunday in Advent

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:31-34). God promises His people a new relationship, not based on the Law of Moses but on grace and faith. The promise finds fulfillment in Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the NT (cf Heb 8). Although the Law is good and holy, it condemns sinners for what we are and what we do. In Christ Jesus, God provides the sacrifice necessary to silence the accusations of the Law. By faith, Christians have a new and right relationship with God (cf Rm 3:21–26)

Epistle (Hebrews 5:1-10). Jesus Christ, our true High Priest, shares our humanity and knows the weaknesses that we experience. Being one with the Father, He is the source of God's full forgiveness. If we approach God confident in our own goodness, we will be condemned according to the strictness of the Law. But Christ Jesus is gentle and understanding. He forgives us, gives us confidence before the Father, and helps us in all our needs.

Gospel (Mark 10:35-45). Jesus puts our welfare and needs ahead of His own as He conducts His ministry, showing us what real leadership is. Jesus shows that those who lead in the kingdom of God serve others in humility. He leads by laying down His life as the sacrifice for our sins and calls us to similar sacrifice.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹ “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. ³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

31:31-34 In Jeremiah's third oracle, the Lord will create also the kind of spiritual reconstruction necessary for the exiles to be His people and He their God. (TLSB)

31:31 time is coming. Time, a creation of God, is also his servant. The revelation of this “new covenant” will be perfectly timed to utilize the condition of Israel and meet the needs of his people. Paul teaches, “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal 4:4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

31:31 new covenant. The way of salvation in both covenants, the old and the new is the same. A person is saved by faith in Christ. The believer under the old covenant looked ahead to Christ as the fulfillment of all the types and pictures of the old covenant. The believer under the new covenant looks back to the accomplished work of Christ. Because the Lord understands human nature and its weakness for sinning, the Lord provided many ways under the old covenant for the believer to receive forgiveness. Through many offerings and various sacrifices, the penitent was assured he had been reconciled with God. (PBC)

31:31 house of Israel ... house of Judah. The reunited people of God. (CSB)

31:32 they broke my covenant. The old covenant imposed many rules upon the Jew, rules they found impossible to observe. Hence the old covenant certainly proved that no one could be saved by keeping it. For that reason the Lord says of their fathers, “They broke my covenant.” We would say: before the ink was dry they broke the covenant with the sin of the golden calf. (PBC)

31:32 I was a husband. Baal the Canaanite god of fertility was Yahweh’s chief competition. The sacred covenant union could be reestablished only by God’s forgiveness and mercy. Christ is the bridegroom, and the church is his bride, washed clean. God is merciful. He loves his people. He reinstates, forgives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

31:33 house of Israel. Even as Israel and Judah will be reunited, so Jew and Gentile will be one in Christ in the new covenant. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

31:33 write it on their hearts. God’s creative and transforming inscription of His will on the people was necessary because the root of their sin lay in their perverse and stubborn will to follow their own evil heart, as Jeremiah often pointed out (3:17; 4:4, 14; 5:23; 7:24). “Faith brings the Holy Spirit and produces a new life in hearts. It must also produce spiritual movements in hearts. The prophet Jeremiah shows what these movements are.... Therefore, when we have been justified by faith and regenerated, we begin to fear and love God, to pray to Him, to expect aid from Him, to give thanks and praise Him, and to obey Him in times of suffering. We also begin to love our neighbors, because our hearts have spiritual and holy movements.... We have said above that renewal and beginning to fulfill the Law must exist in us.... If anyone should cast away love, even though he has great faith, he does not keep his faith. For he does not keep the Holy Spirit” (Ap V 4, 98). (TLSB)

31:33 I will be ... my people. It is God’s grace alone that makes us his people. Through Christ’s death and resurrection, we have become the children of God. The Father has adopted us for the sake of his Son. The human mediators of the old covenant (Moses, the priest, etc.) who stood between God and his people have given way to Jesus, the one mediator between God and man. Now God deals directly and individually with each of us, giving forgiveness and mercy. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

31:34 No longer ... teach his neighbor. The promise is that through the proclamation about Christ those who hear and believe will know for themselves the salvation of God. (PBC)

31:34 remember their sins no more. This phrase is not an indictment of God’s omniscience, but a description of his mercy. For the sake of Christ, he will not recall our sins on the Day of Judgment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

EPISTLE – Hebrews 5:1-10

Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. ³ This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. ⁴ No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” ⁶ And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” ⁷ During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

5:1-4 The author advances the thought of Christ's superior priesthood by drawing a comparison between Him and the high priests of Judaism. (PBC)

5:2 *those who are ignorant and are going astray.* Those who sinned defiantly and thus blasphemed God were to be cut off from Israel and carry their sins with them. Those who sinned ignorantly and unintentionally were to have their sins covered by the sacrifice brought on the Day of Atonement. The high priest, knowing from his own human experience the weaknesses with which his people had to grapple, could deal moderately with them. (PBC)

5:5 *Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest.* The Father appointed Jesus to serve as the true High Priest. The quote from Ps 2:7 was addressed to the earthly king of God's people. Yet it prophesied Christ's enthronement in glory after His ascension. (TLSB)

5:6 *in the order of Melchizedek.* Melchizedek is one of those mysteries of Holy Scriptures, appearing only three times. In Genesis 14:18-20 he appears briefly as he meets and blesses Abraham returning from rescuing Lot. There he is called both "King of Salem" and priest of God Most High." In Psalm 110:4 David refers to him even more briefly and by inspiration sees in him a type of Christ, who would be both King and Priest. Here in Hebrews the reference is in much greater detail. (PBC)

5:7 *loud cries and tears.* The anguish and the agony deepen till they lead to His sweat "like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Did any of those Hebrew Christians think they were alone? Was persecution's pressure rubbing their souls sore? Here was one who, utterly alone, had gone through more than they would ever know. Here was one who would know just how to help them. (PBC)

5:9 *for all who obey him.* Here obedience is the fruit of faith, that is, utter trust in the person, word and work of Christ who humbly submits to the will of God out of love.

GOSPEL – Mark 10:35-45

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." ³⁶ "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. ³⁷ They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." ³⁸ "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" ³⁹ "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." ⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

10:35 *we want you to do for us whatever we ask.* More shocking was their preliminary request with which they sought to bind Jesus without His knowing what they were going to ask. Their request showed they believed Jesus could give them anything they might ask. That they first asked Jesus to assure them hints that they suspected Jesus might not approve. How right they were! (PBC)

10:37 *sit at your right and the other at your left.* First and second positions of power. James and John are referring to an earthly kingdom. (TLSB)

10:38 *you don't know what you are asking.* Jesus is signaling them to stop pursuing this course. He is gentle. (Buls)

10:38 drink the cup I drink. A Jewish expression that meant to share someone's fate. In the OT the cup of wine was a common metaphor for God's wrath against human sin and rebellion. Accordingly, the cup Jesus had to drink refers to divine punishment of sins that he bore in place of sinful mankind (see 10:45; 14:36). (CSB)

10:39 we can. The confident reply of the two disciples, together with Jesus' corrective remarks, suggest that James and John understood Jesus' fate and their own to be that of heroic martyrs, perhaps in the manner of the Maccabee brothers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

10:39 you will drink the cup. Jesus predicted a life of suffering for the sake of the Gospel. (TLSB)

10:39-40 Jesus teaches three things. First, the brothers will share his cup and Baptism, i.e., they will suffer for the sake of the Son of Man's ministry. Second, in his state of humiliation, Jesus cannot grant positions of power or privilege. Third, the places are not open for arbitrary distribution but are designated for those for whom they have been prepared. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

10:41 ten indignant. The other disciples also hoped to sit in the seats of highest honor. (TLSB)

10:42 Jesus called them together. Lest this matter become a cause of strife among the Twelve, Jesus then instructed them on the enormous difference between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of heaven. (PBC)