

Notes for Next Sunday

Last Sunday of the Church Year

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 51: 4-6). This is the third time in the chapter that Yahweh commands the captives to “look confidently” in faith (see also 51:1-2). He is repeating an earlier direction to Abram (Gen. 15:5). He is telling the Babylon captives that everything, including Babylon is subject to his control.

Epistle (Jude 20-25). These are the concluding verses of this book. Jude urges them to fortify their faith during the continuing struggles they are experiencing. Next he encourages to show their faith by works of love. Finally, comes a comforting doxology.

Gospel (Mark 13:24-37). This gives continued signs of the coming end of the world. Despite the many things to look for, Jesus makes the point that not even, he in his human nature, does not know the day of judgment. This calls for constant vigilance on the part of Christians. Sandwiched in this text is the promise that Jesus's words will never pass away.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 51:4-6

4 “Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. 5 My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. 6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.

51:5 righteousness draws near. If Yahweh is committed to the restoration of his people, what will he do about the sin that precipitated Israel's apostasy, idolatry, and exile? He will commission Cyrus to conquer Israel's conqueror Babylon (Is. 47), but how will he save Israel? The Suffering Servant is Yahweh's answer. He embodies Yahweh's arm (53:1). “Righteousness” and “Salvation” come through this mighty “arm” (51:5). Through this loyal Servant, God restores Israel and brings enduring salvation also to the Gentiles. (CC)

Lift ... to the heavens. Amazing, isn't it! According to the *World Book Encyclopedia*, “with large telescopes astronomers can photograph over thirty billion stars. And we think there must be billions more beyond the reach of our most powerful telescopes.” Not only is He able to name each one but also brings out each one every night.

sky ... scroll ... starry host will fall.† Referred to in Mt 24:29 in connection with the second coming of Christ.). (CSB)

The Lord invites His people to consider things that seem unalterably fixed and sure – the heavens above and the earth beneath. Nothing appears to be more stable than these works of the Lord's hands. But they are not among the things that endure to all eternity. (Leupold)

EPISTLE – Jude 20-25

20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that

leads to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. 24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

20 beloved. In contrast to the ungodly false teachers, about whom this letter speaks at length. (CSB)

building yourselves up – After Jude reminds the recipients of their status as “beloved” in Christ he proceeds to the first participial phrase: “building yourselves up by the means of your holy faith.” On the basis of the indicatives of divine love and mercy, Jude invites the readers to live thus in their redeemed identity as they “content for the faith” (Jude 3). While the spirit-less purveyors of the false doctrine are attempting to tear apart the church (Jude 19), Jude invites the Christians to build each other up. The imagery of construction envisions the church as the new temple, the place of God’s incarnational, merciful presence as He comes to his holy people in His Word and Sacraments. The plural reflexive pronoun, “yourselves,” has a corporate connotation, referring to the Christians’ mutual consolation with the Word as well as corporate gathering around the Word and the Lord’s Supper (Jude 12). (CC p. 345)

most holy faith. The Christian faith is set apart from the world’s unbelief. Such faith is not common to the world; it is holy. (TLSB)

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God. God keeps believers in his love (see Ro 8:35–39), and enables them to keep themselves in his love. (CSB)

22–23 those who doubt ... others. Perhaps those who have come under the influence of the apostates. (CSB)

All Christians might have questions (e.g., David asked questions in the Ps). They should be treated with patience so that faith might overcome their doubts. (TLSB)

Now in Jude 22-23, Jude turns to contending for the faith in relation to those of the communion who, to one degree or another, have been deceived and seduced by the heretical intruders. Should the faithful beloved reconcile with them, ignore them, shun them, or hate them? Jude approaches the wayward members of the congregation with a pastoral heart of care in the hope of bringing them repentance and back into the communion. In the same breath, however, Jude jealously guard and protects the beloved from falling prey themselves to the seductive influence of evil. (CC p. 349)

24–25 After all the attention necessarily given in this letter to the ungodly and their works of darkness, Jude concludes his letter by focusing attention on God, who is fully able to keep those who put their trust in him. (CSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 13:24-37

24 “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

13:24-37 The eschatological section of Mark’s Gospel assigned for this day is the end of a longer discourse from Jesus given to his disciples after they left the temple. They remarked on the beautiful buildings and stones, which prompted Jesus to warn them of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. Many

try to use these verses to construct predictions of when Jesus' return will be. Jesus answers the question of when, not by telling the disciples times or definitive signs to prove the date, but rather by telling them what to do when they encounter certain situations. When you hear . . . do not be alarmed (13:5–8). When they bring you to trial . . . do not be anxious (13:9–13). When you see . . . let those who are in Judea flee (13:14–23; C. S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible: Mark* [New York: Doubleday, 1986], 527). These do not answer the question of when Jesus will return. Any effort to twist them to that purpose is futile. Rather, these describe the mountaintop in the foreground. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

28 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

13:28-29 *tauta*, “these things,” the signs of vv 3–23. These verses interpret what it means when these frightening signs appear. When you see these things happen, they are actually like the fig tree pushing forth its leaves. As those buds are a sure sign summer is near, so the signs show that “he is near, at the very gates” (v 29). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part)

32 “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. 35 Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— 36 lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

13:32-37 The four imperatives in the text have to do with attentiveness and watchfulness. The first admonition in v 33, (*blepete*, literally, “Keep watching” (NIV: “Be on guard”; RSV: “take heed”) occurs throughout Mark’s gospel and is translated in different ways in Mk 4:24; 8:15; 12:38, coming to a climax in chapters 13 and 14. Here Jesus is preparing his disciples for the changes that would come with his imminent crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension (Mk 13:5, 9, 23, 33, 35,37; 14:34, 38). Synoptic parallels are found in Mt 24:36–44; 25:13; Lk 21:34–36. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)