

Notes for Next Sunday

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 51:1-6). The children of Israel had not listened to God for a long time. They had followed the gods of the people around them. Often they were the gods that were in the hills (Ashtoreth poles). The Lord directs His people to return to the story of Abraham and Sarah. Both of them left their homeland and traveled to a far distant land because God invited them to go and promised great things. The whole process is comprehended in the one term “comfort,” which includes feeling sorry for the one in need and also administering help. Joy and gladness will again be found because of the transformation that is to take place. And the response on Israel’s part will be “thanksgiving and sounds of praise.” Ultimately these benefits will accrue to all nations.

Epistle (Romans 11:33-12:8). Verse 33-36 are the doxology that ends this section of Romans is the natural outpouring of Paul’s praise to God, whose wisdom and knowledge brought about his great plan for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles who believe. In 12:1-8 Paul turns to the practical application of all he has said previously in the letter. Paul goes into detail to show that Jesus Christ is to be Lord of every area of our life. These chapters are not a postscript to the great theological discussions in chs. 1–11. In a certain sense the entire letter has been directed toward the goal of showing that God demands our Christian life as well as our believing and thinking. Faith expresses itself in obedience.

Gospel (Matthew 16:13-20). This text places Jesus with his disciples up in the region of Caesarea Philippi, a city some distance from the usual area of Jesus’ ministry, and deep in the territory of the Gentiles. Jesus asks his disciples an interesting and leading question. Jesus asks his disciples what people are thinking about him. Peter, speaking for all the apostles, acknowledges that all the hopes of Israel have come true in Jesus, God’s Son, whom God the Father has anointed. Peter’s blessedness is the result that Peter is among those to whom the Father reveals the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven. Peter’s confession is not of human origin. Peter’s rocklike confession of faith was the solid foundation on which Christ would build His Church. The authority is given to Peter, but we may confidently state that he represented all the apostles when he spoke to Jesus and when Jesus spoke these words to him.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 51:1-6

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; ²look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many. ³The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing. ⁴“Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. ⁵My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm. ⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.

51:1 rock. Abraham is the first person overtly credited in Scripture with “righteousness” through faith alone (Gen. 15:6). This is one reason Yahweh points people to consider the patriarch. He instructs them to recall their past and return to the roots of their faith, the “rock” and “quarry” from which they came. His

promises of grace to Abraham formed the bedrock upon which Israel was first built, and Sarah was the cavity from which Israel was born. (CC)

51:3 deserts like Eden. More than merely returning to Jerusalem of the past, the restoration will be like the perfection of Eden. Israel will be once again a well-tended garden (cf Is 5:1–2). (TLSB)

51:4 light to the nations. God’s Word and restoration are not restricted to Israel but will touch a wide range of nations. (TLSB)

51:5 righteousness draws near. In the deliverance from exile. Ultimately, salvation through Christ will come to all nations. (righteousness is equivalent to salvation). (CSB)

51:5 arm. Symbolizes power. God’s successful overall rule could hardly be described more simply and clearly than in the words “my arm.” All issues of history lie in the hollow of God’s hand. (Leupold)

51:6 earth will wear out like a garment. Neither creation nor the enemies of God’s people are eternal. The material world is transitory, but the Word of the Lord “will not pass away” (Mt 24:35; cf Mt 5:18). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Romans 11:33-12:8

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” ³⁵“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” ³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. ¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. ³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

11:33 the depth of the riches. The wealth of God’s grace and glory the wisdom of His purposeful actions in history to save, and His intimate knowledge of us are too deep for human beings to fathom. (TLSB)

11:34 who has known the mind of the Lord. “Who has given Him advice?” Isaiah asked (Is 40:13). (Franzmann)

11:36 from Him and through Him and to Him. With three prepositions, Paul declares God, Creator and Savior, to be the source, means, and goal of everything. He is Alpha and Omega. (TLSB)

12:1 your bodies. Since men are never without their bodies, worship is constant. Since bodies are visible, all worship becomes a witness and a proclamation, a lived doxology to God. (Franzmann)

12:1 living sacrifices. In contrast to dead animal sacrifices, or perhaps “living” in the sense of having the new life of the Holy Spirit. (CSB)

12:2 not conform. This is an outward molding to fit a pattern. Believers should not be molded by the ways of this world. (TLSB)

12:2 be transformed. This transformation therefore involves a perpetual renewal of the mind, making-new of the religious intellect for the life in the new age. In every case, as each case may arise, the child of God is called upon to “prove” the will of God, that is, to weigh and ponder and decide what the revealed will of his Father God is asking of him now. (Franzmann)

12:3 do not think of yourself more highly than you ought. All men are soloists by nature and inclination; they must learn the art of playing in God’s orchestra. (Franzmann)

12:5 one body in Christ ... members one of another. Cf 1Co 12:13. Members of Christ’s body are never alone. We have been joined eternally to Him, as well as to one another (14:7–8). (TLSB)

12:5 in Christ. The key to Paul’s concept of Christian unity. It is only in Jesus Christ that any unity in the church is possible. True unity is spiritually based. See note on 6:11. (CSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 16:13-20

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” 14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” 20 Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

16:15 who do you say I am. The *you* is plural. “Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of apostles, as appears from the text itself. Christ does not ask Peter alone. (TLSB)

16:17 blessed are you. Simon is not praised for his great insight; he is pronounced blessed because God the Father has revealed the Son to him. (CC)

16:18 Peter ... rock ... church. † In the Greek “Peter” is *petros* and “rock” is *petra*. The rock on which the church is built is Peter’s inspired (v. 17) confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah, “the Son of the living God.” The Greek *petros*, basically a pebble, is here distinguished from *petra*, a solid rock. Peter, with all his shortcomings, and the disciples (for whom he speaks in his confession) occupy a fundamental position in establishing the church (Eph 2:20). Their position is not one of lordship but of ministry; they are to serve (2Co 1:24; Mt 20:26; 1Co 3:5). (CSB)

16:18 church. The Church is the assembly, or gathering, of all believers. Christ is the builder of the Church, and each individual member is a living stone (1Pt 2:5). This passage and 18:17 are the only times “church” is used in the Gospels. (TLSB)

16:18 Hades. Christ acknowledges that during the time when He is building His church upon the apostles and their confession of His, this assembly of disciples will find itself under assault. (CC)

16:19 keys. The door of heaven is opened through the forgiveness of sins. (TLSB)