

Notes for Next Sunday

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Genesis 4:1-15). This text is the unfortunate story of Cain and Abel. When Cain was born, Eve had high hopes that this boy was the answer to the promise that God had made after the fall into sin. But as the lives of Cain and Abel emerge, it becomes clear that Cain is not the answer of a Messiah. His worship offerings are not the best of his crops but the leftovers. Abel on the other hand gives the first and best of the animals that he tends. When Cain does not check his anger as God had advised, he murders Abel. Cain follows that up by denying that he doesn't know anything about Abel's fate. Cain tries to dictate how he will be punished, but God promises protection for Cain as he wanders the earth.

Epistle (2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18). In verses 6-8, Paul summarizes the exhaustion of his ministry as he comes to end of it. Now he looks forward to the eternal reward that God has for believers when their life ends. In verses 16-18, Paul speaks of how no one was there when he was on trial. BUT, he points out that he was not alone because Jesus was at his side that whole time.

Gospel (Luke 18:9-17). Verses 9-14 are the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector at prayer. The Pharisee's prayer is one of arrogance and self-righteousness. The tax collector came with empty hands and loads of humility. Jesus points out that the tax collector "*went down to his house justified.*" (v. 14) Verses 15-17 are Jesus continuing emphasis on value of humility. In these verses Jesus points to the great value of little children who are often very much at the mercy of adults. Jesus' disciples were in the process of trying to divert people who were trying to bring children to Jesus. Jesus strongly rebukes his disciples and points out that everyone needs to enter the kingdom of heaven with the humility of a child.