**Notes for Next Sunday**

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

**The Point of this Week’s Readings**

All of the readings deal with inner strength that comes from God’s WORD.

Psalm (Psalm 119:129-136). The major thought of this section may be summarized in this manner: God’s wonderful testimonies confer many blessings, therefore they are to be faithfully kept. When the writer states that God’s testimonies are wonderful he does not specify in what particular respect they are to be thus described, chiefly, perhaps, because the wonders of God’s law are so plentiful.

Old Testament (Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9). The opening verses make a demand that serves as an attention-grabbing summons concerning Israel. God wants Israel to receive the Word in faith. Along with a knowledge of what the Lord wanted, the Spirit of God also gave His people willing hearts to respond to His commands.

Epistle (Ephesians 6:10-20). This reading is about being armed to defeat the devil. The first issue is to remember that the foe is out of this world powerful and vicious. This is not an enemy that people can conquer with human skills. Paul lists a number of weapons that are at the disposal of Christians. They all come back to the all-powerful Word of God.

Gospel (Mark 7:14-23). Jesus does not simply refute and criticize the Pharisees. He also teaches the people the correct understanding of God’s will and human nature. (TLSB) Jesus reminds that the Word needs to be in heart because it is seat of emotions and thought. The heart produces fruit that reveals a person’s character.

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

**Psalm 119:129-136**

**129﻿ Your statutes are wonderful; therefore I obey them. ﻿130﻿ The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. ﻿131﻿ I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands. ﻿132﻿ Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name. ﻿133﻿ Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me. ﻿134﻿ Redeem me from the oppression of men, that I may obey your precepts. ﻿135﻿ Make your face shine upon your servant and teach me your decrees. ﻿136﻿ Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*119:129-136 wonderful.* One of the wonders of the divine Word is that, when its truth is unfolded to men, it brings with it new and deeper insights to all men and particularly to the “simple” who are the ones who keep their heart open to its beneficent influences (v. 130). (Leupold)

*119:130 unfolding.* It literally means “opening,” here meaning (1) the revelation of your words, (2) the interpretation of your words, or (3) the entering of your words into the heart. (CSB)

*119:131 Pant.* Like an exhausted runner, the psalmist gasps for the reviving of God’s Commandments. They are his breath and God’s very breath within him.

*119:132 turn to me and have mercy on me.* This verse does not contain a word about God’s law. When, however, the prayer of the psalmist is that God would turn unto him and have mercy upon him, we know that God usually does such conferring of His help and mercy through His Word. What makes the psalmist bold to pray thus is the fact that God’s gracious attitude toward men is His customary procedure in dealing with His own. (Leupold)

*119:135-136.*The last two verses present a direct contrast. The first asks for God’s gracious favor that the psalmist may be taught the divine statues; the second shows his grief over the reckless way in which men disregard the law of the Lord. Such personal grief, so deeply felt, may well shame all those who feel far less keenly on the subject. (Leupold)

**Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9**

**Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. ﻿2﻿ Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you. ﻿6﻿ Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” ﻿7﻿ What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? ﻿8﻿ And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? ﻿9﻿ Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*4:1 decrees and* laws. Through many of these decrees in the Torah God calls not just for certain outward behaviors and observances from his people but also for faith in his promises to love, bless and forgive them.

*4:1 is giving you.* Note the Gospel action, his initiative-taking, and his covenant faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. The Promised Land is not earned or deserved; it is given as a gift. Thus it is a type of the ultimate Promised Land, heaven, which is opened to sinners only through Christ’s atoning work and entered via God-given faith.

*4:2 Do not add … do not subtract.*† The revelation the Lord gives is sufficient. All of it must be accepted, and anything that adulterates or contradicts it cannot be tolerated (see 12:32; Pr 30:6; Gal 3:15; Rev 22:18–19). (CSB)

*4:7 What other nation.* Neighboring pagan nations would look to Israel and see that the true God is not silent or inanimate but rather living and active. The Lord is not distant from Israel, far removed in the heavens. He is near to them, and in their time of troubles—which will certainly come—they may call upon him and he will answer them.

*4:7 near us whenever we pray.* The Israelites always had access to the Lord in prayer. His presence was symbolized by the tabernacle in the center of the camp, and by the pillar of cloud over the tabernacle (see Ex 40:34–38; Nu 23:21). (CSB)

*4:9 Teach them to your children.* Parents have a covenant responsibility to train their children in obedience to God (Pr 22:6). This command extends into the NT (Mt 19:14; Ac 2:39). (TLSB)

**Epistle – Ephesians 6:10-20**

**10﻿ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ﻿11﻿ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ﻿12﻿ For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ﻿13﻿ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ﻿14﻿ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ﻿15﻿ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ﻿16﻿ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ﻿17﻿ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ﻿18﻿ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. 19﻿ Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ﻿20﻿ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*6:10 strong … power.* Implies that human effort is inadequate but God’s power is invincible. (CSB)

*6:10 the full armor.* This is the complete outfit of a heavily armed soldier. The image may have occurred to Paul in prison by looking at his Roman guard, though the details are closer to OT models (the typical shin armor and spear of a Roman soldier do not appear in the list). (TLSB)

*6:11 devil’s schemes.* Particularly false doctrine, designed to lead us away from God. (TLSB)

The final four words mean: "The tricky methods of the devil." We are reminded of Luther's words: "Deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight; On earth is not his equal."  *Lutheran Service Book 656* (Buls)

*6:12 struggle.* Struggle" comes from a wrestling match. It was a fight characterized by trickery, cunningness and strategy. This struggle is no mere sport. (Buls)

*6:12 heavenly realms.* Behind the Church’s earthly opponents stand demonic forces; therefore, the Church should not try to fight with worldly tools (2 Cor. 10:3-4). (TLSB)

*6:14 belt of truth.* A belt holds loose clothing in preparation for moving quickly (Ex. 12:11; cf. Heb. 12:1). God’s truth alone can counter the devil’s lies. (TLSB)

*6:14 breastplate of righteousness.* The metal piece of protecting the chest’s vital organs, here represents Christ’s righteousness with which God clothes us. (TLSB)

*6:15 feet fitted with the readiness.* A Roman soldier wore half boots studded with nails, to help him stand firm. The preaching of the Gospel of peace has ironically, prepared us for battle. (TLSB)

*6:16 shield of faith … extinguish … flaming arrows.* Arrow were dipped in pitch and set alight. In defense, Roman soldiers soaked their full-length, leather-covered wooden shield in water before battle – an allusion to our baptismal refuge.” (TLSB)

*6:17 helmet of salvation.* Isa 59:17 has similar language, along with the breastplate imagery. The helmet both protected the soldier and provided a striking symbol of military victory. (CSB)

*6:17 sword of the Spirit.*  We must also draw the sword and go for him with such insistence that he must fall back and flee and we thus obtain the victory over him. Since the Word of God is this weapon, it behooves us to make use of it at all times and to this end become acquainted with it both by means of worship, Bible study and personal study. (Kretzmann)

*6:18 pray in the Spirit.* This is a reminder that the battle is spiritual and must be fought in God’s strength, depending on the Word and on God through prayer. (CSB)

Prayer is not part of the armor (which is entirely God’s work), but a transition to Paul’s concluding words. The Letter ends as it began – with prayer. In our weakness, the Spirit leads our prayer (Rm. 8:15-16, 26-27). (TLSB)

**Gospel – Mark 7:14-23**

**14﻿ Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ﻿15﻿ Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’﻿” ﻿17﻿ After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ﻿18﻿ “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? ﻿19﻿ For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”) ﻿20﻿ He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ ﻿21﻿ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ﻿22﻿ greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ﻿23﻿ All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*7:14 called the crowd.* This is a tender word of invitation. This verse begins a paragraph, but not a different occasion. Jesus had likely been talking to the common people in verse 1, when interrupted by the delegation from Jerusalem. Likely at verse 14 the delegation left and Jesus again addressed the people who were misled by the authorities.

*7:15 it is what* comes out of. Jesus’ expression did not abrogate the Mosaic laws on purification or erase distinctions between clean and unclean and declare them invalid. It rather attacked the delusion that sinful men can attain to true purity which is powerless to cleanse the defilement of the heart.

*7:17* Jesus provided additional, private teaching for the disciples, away from the crowds. (TLSB)

*7:19 into his heart.* The new element in Jesus’ interpretation is the specific reference to “the heart.” In Semitic expression the heart is the center of human personality which determines man’s entire action and inaction.

*7:20 makes him unclean.* Jesus clarified that what does indeed defile is no what enters from the outside, but rather what lurks in the hearts of fallen people. (TLSB)

*7:21, 22.* Beginning with sexual immorality, 12 kinds of evil thoughts and actions are combined in a dreadful list of vices. The first six are in the plural form and describe behaviors; the last six are in the singular and have more to do with attitudes. These 12 vices leave no doubt as the wretched impurity of the human spirit. (TLSB)

*7:23* There are those in our society who believe that the primary way to improve man is to cleanse his environment and the pollution which enters man. But Christianity teaches that God cleanses our hearts by faith (Acts 15:9) and the Christian must often pray: "Create in me a clean heart, Oh God." (Psalm 51:10) (Buls)