

Notes for Next Sunday
Second Sunday after Epiphany

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 49:1-7). This is the Second Servant Song and shares the following characteristics with other texts. First, the Servant's address to the coastlands and distant peoples in 49:1a-b suggests a court speech, much like 41:1; 48:14. Second, much like Jeremiah (1:5), the Servant is called while still in his mother's womb. Third, Is.49:3 appears to be much like Ps. 2:7-9 and therefore suggests something like the Servant's commission. And fourth, in 49:4-6, the Servant recalls an earlier peril followed by Yahweh's salvation, much like Psalms 30; 116; and 118). (CC)

Epistle (1 Corinthians 1:1-9). The Corinthian Christians had many spiritual problems that would be addressed by Paul. In this reading Paul begins by establishing his credentials so that what he was about to say would lead to a change of behavior where the Corinthian's were concerned. Instead of beginning with reprimands, Paul points to many positives that he feels about them. Paul sees them as people who are sanctified and called Christians (v. 2). He gives thanks because they have been given grace in Christ Jesus (v. 4). Paul assures them that they have every spiritual gift needed to be Christ's witnesses and be sustained by Him (vv. 7-8). Lastly, Paul comforts them with the promise that God is faithful to them in their fellowship (v. 9).

Gospel (John 1:29-42a). An understanding of what John made Jesus out to be, "the Lamb of God," would come from a familiarity with the Seder meal narrative for Passover. In Leviticus 16 we learn that the high priest casts lots for the two goats used on the day, "one lot for the Lord, the other for the scapegoat" (Lev 16:8). The goat whose lot fell for the Lord was sacrificed as a sin offering. Over time this goat became known as "the Lamb of God." Jesus is this final Paschal Lamb whose blood we need placed on (that is, in) our bodies so that death will pass over us. And we do eat and drink this greater paschal meal in the Lord's Supper, the New Testament Seder: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 49:1-7

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. ²He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. ³He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor." ⁴But I said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God." ⁵And now the LORD says— he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength— ⁶he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." ⁷This is what the LORD says— the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel— to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: "Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

49:1 listen to me. Jesus is saying “listen to me” have something important to say. Reminds one of Transfiguration where the Father says “listen to him.”

49:1 islands. Distant lands to the west, the farthest extent of the known world. (TLSB)

49:1 Before I was born ... called me.† Cf. v. 5. The language is similar to that of the call of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 1:5) and of the apostle Paul (Gal 1:15). – Before Jesus’ human birth. It was also a plan from eternity. (CSB)

49:2 my mouth ... sharpened sword. What they hear has the cutting edge of a sharp sword and hits its mark with the penetrating force of “a polished arrow” (cf Jer 1:10; 23:29). Nothing can blunt these words, for God’s hand hides them in His scabbard and quiver. This Servant’s weapons come from His mouth, i.e., His words (cf Eph 6:17; Rv 2:12, 16; 19:15). (TLSB)

49:2 polished arrow. Arrows are used of God’s judgment in Dt 32:23, 42, of the deadly words of the wicked in Ps 64:3–4 and of Satan’s schemes and temptations in Eph 6:11, 16. (CSB)

49:3 labored to no purpose ... in vain. The Servant speaks of the seeming ineffectiveness of His work, but nevertheless relies on the Lord for His strength. (TLSB)

49:6 too small a thing. The Servant is to affect a salvation benefiting not only the “preserved of Israel” but extending “to the end of the earth.” (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ²To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: ³Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:1 called. Note “called” a passive verbal adjective, is used of Paul, verse 1, and of the Corinthians, verse 2. His conversion and status as an Apostle were only through God’s call. Their conversion was only through God’s call. (Buls)

1:2 sanctified. Made holy, specifically in Baptism (6:11). This is God’s work in the life of a sinner, through Christ, not the holiness of the person’s conduct. (TLSB)

⁴I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—⁶because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. ⁷Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

1:5 speaking and ... knowledge. This is not restricted to some specific type of speaking as “in tongues.” This refers to every form of expressing the saving truth of Christ. Where all forms of teaching and admonition manifest themselves, there the natural result will be that all forms of knowledge will spread in the congregation and thus likewise abound. (Lenski)

1:7 any spiritual gift. These blessings originate in the Spirit of God. Our redemption is the chief gift (Rom. 5:15) and consequently the means God has given to equip His Church to minister to one another with that gift. (TLSB)

1:8 keep you strong. The gift of Christ's holiness made the saints holy; therefore, they will be kept "guiltless" in His innocence until His return. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – John 1:29-42a

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." ³² Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

1:31 I ... did not know him. John knew Jesus (they were cousins; cf. Luke 1:36), but until Jesus was baptized, John did not know that He was the Messiah (cf. V. 33). (TLSB)

1:33 he ... will baptize with the Holy Spirit. The One upon whom the Spirit came at His Baptism now gives the Spirit through Holy Baptism (Ti 3:5). Luther: "Thus our Baptism in Christ, in which He gives us remission of sin, baptizing us with the Holy Spirit and with forgiveness, remains and continues to be effective" (AE 22:179). (TLSB)

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

1:38 Rabbi. The Hebrew title used by John's disciples shows their recognition of Jesus as one to follow. They place themselves underneath Jesus as students, just as John placed himself underneath Jesus as the one who ranked before him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 1)

1:38 where are you staying. Their answer turned the focus properly back on Jesus. They wanted to stay with Jesus, learn from Him and get from Him what He had to offer them. Should any disciple want anything more? (PBC)

1:40 Andrew. Assumes readers' knowledge of previous Gospels or Christian teaching as Peter is not previously introduced in John. Andrew came to Christ first and led his well-known brother to the Lord. (TLSB)

1:41 Messiah. Once again John remembered to translate the Aramaic term for his Greek readers. Andrew had found the "Messiah," which is the "Christ." (PBC)