

Notes for Next Sunday
Third Sunday after Epiphany

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 9:1-4). Verse 1 looks back to the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom, which included two of the northern-most tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali in 722-721 B.C. In 701 B.C., the southern kingdom and Jerusalem itself were threatened by the Assyrian king, Sennacherib. Although spared at this time, Judah would eventually fall to the Babylonians almost a century and half later as Isaiah warns. With the north in captivity, Jerusalem threatened, and eventual exile certain, a cloud of darkness hung over Jerusalem and Judah, because their sins, especially their apostasy from Yahweh. In that context Isaiah's words of hope, "There will be no more gloom for those who are in distress," were greatly needed and should have been welcome.

Epistle (1 Corinthians 1:10-18). Just as Isaiah's words of comfort are based on God's new act of salvation ("Comfort, comfort my people ... her iniquity is pardoned," Is 40:1-2), so Paul's appeal to the saints is based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As an apostle he could make his weight felt and issue commands (as he will do in, for example, 1 Cor 4:16; 5:7; 6:18; 7:12-13; 10:14; 11:28; 14:37; 16:1). But he prefers the pastoral approach of encouraging his flock in keeping with his role as their father in the faith. This Gospel-based comfort, now recorded in the Scriptures for subsequent generations of Christians, is filled with the power of the Spirit to build up the church. The edification or up-building of the church will be a prominent theme of the epistle. (CC p. 39)

Gospel (Matthew 4:12-25). When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew from the region around the Jordan into Galilee, heading northward after his wilderness conflict with the Satan. The language of 4:12-14 strongly parallels the language of 2:22-23. This shows the connection between chapter 4 and chapter 2 as parts of the same major section of the Gospel (1:1-4:16). It also shows that Jesus himself will choose the times and ways to confront the evil men who seek to destroy or hinder the work of God's gracious reign. (CC)

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 9:1-4

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan—²The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. ³You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. ⁴For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

9:1 will honor Galilee. Fulfilled when Jesus ministered in Capernaum—near the major highway from Egypt to Damascus, called the "way of the sea" (Mt 4:13-15). (CSB)

9:2 people ... darkness. All people walking in darkness without God's salvation. (TLSB)

9:2 great light. The light that will appear is the presence of the Lord. (TLSB)

9:4 Midian's defeat. This relates to when Gideon defeated the Midianites with only 300 men. This was a battle and victory without the use of the sword, without man being involved. The situation in the final period will be similar. Then God will again, without sword and might, without humans having anything

to do with it, in a miraculous way, break the enemy's oppressive dominion and free His people from the hand of its enemy. In this context the prophet is describing in general terms the salvation of the NT. (Stoeckhardt)

9:4 yoke ... bar. Tools of enslavement. Yokes controlled animals and prisoners. A staff and rod brought discipline. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. ¹¹ My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹² What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. ¹⁶ (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1:10 brothers. In Christ believers have a unity similar to that of blood brothers and sisters. Paul is referring to both men and women. (CSB)

1:10 no divisions. There should be "no factions" in the congregation. The word "faction" may mean a "tear" in a garment (Mk 2:21). Although the congregation is not yet so divided that Paul cannot address the Corinthians as a unified whole, it seems they are on the verge of being torn apart. Like his Lord in the high priestly prayer, Paul is concerned that they should "continue to be one" (Jn 17:21, 23). They should not let their loyalty to their favorite leaders rend the community any further. (CC p. 43)

1:13 Is Christ divided? Rhetorical, sarcastic questions. Paul indicates that loyalty to him is misplaced; he is but a messenger and servant. (TLSB)

1:16 household. Other examples of households being baptized are those of Cornelius (Ac 10:24, 48), Lydia (Ac 16:15) and the Philippian jailer (Ac 16:33–34). The term may include family members, servants or anyone who lived in the house. (CSB)

1:17 not ... to baptize. Paul is not minimizing baptism; rather, he is asserting that his God-given task was primarily to preach. Jesus (Jn. 4:2) and Peter (Ac 10:48) also had others baptize for them. (CSB)

1:17 be empty of its power. The Gospel stands on its own and is not strengthened by rhetoric or logic. However, a speaker may use these skills in service to the Gospel. (TLSB)

1:18 to those who are perishing. Those who see only foolishness in the cross deny its power to save them from eternal destruction. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 4:12-25

¹² When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. ¹³ Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— ¹⁴ to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: ¹⁵ "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶ the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." ¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

4:12 John had been put in prison. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great and ruler of Galilee, imprisoned John for condemning his adulterous relationship with his brother's wife (cf. 14:1-12). (TLSB)

4:12 he returned to Galilee. Means that He had been there before. This same verbs occurs at Matthew 14:13, after the Baptist's death. Stoeckhardt says: "This removal of John from the scene of activity served Jesus as a suggestion from His heavenly Father to enter to the full extent upon His Messianic career."

4:13 Capernaum. Although not mentioned in the OT, it was evidently a sizable town in Jesus' day. Peter's house there became Jesus' base of operations during his extended ministry in Galilee. A fifth-century basilica now stands over the supposed site of Peter's house, and a fourth-century synagogue is located a short distance from it. (CSB)

4:15 land of Zebulun...naphtlai...along the Jordan. It was in and around Galilee that Jesus spent most of his life on earth. The land of Zebulun was west of the Sea of Galilee and was bounded on the north by the land of Naphtali. The region toward the sea was the west of these, and extended from north and south along the Mediterranean. Beyond the Jordan indicates the territory east of the Jordan (Perea – location of Luke 15 ministry). For centuries those living in this large territory had been exposed to political and military aggression from the north (Syria, Assyria etc) and to the corrosive moral and religious influences of a pagan environment. Many of the inhabitants had been deported. The people of Galilee were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, pagan people, by and large.

1:17 Repent.† Jesus began his public ministry with the same message as that of John the Baptist (3:2). The people must repent because God's reign was drawing near in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. Matthew distinguishes between the two calls to repentance by means of the Scripture he cites; John's is preparatory (3:3), while Jesus' combines word and act. (CSB)

¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

4:20 at once they followed. They had acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah a year earlier (John 1). This explains their immediate compliance at this time. They were not blind followers, but were believers.

4:21 sons of Zebedee. One commentator thinks that Zebedee was a prosperous fisherman with connections in Jerusalem.

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

4:23 teaching ... preaching ... healing.† Jesus' threefold ministry. The synagogues provided a place for him to teach on the Sabbath. During the week he preached to larger crowds in the open air. For an example of Jesus' teaching and preaching. (CSB)