

Notes for Next Sunday

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Genesis 15:1-6). This reading follows the episode of where Abram had rescued Lot as well as some of the kings in the region of Sodom from enemy kings who had captured them and carried them away. The king of Sodom offers to reward Abram but Abram does not want to be beholden to anyone except God. Now God comes to Abram and promises to be Abram's great reward. In anguish Abram points out that he doesn't have anyone to give all that he has except his servant Eliezer. At this point God takes Abram out at night and tells Abram that his offspring will be as numerous as the stars they see in the night sky. Abram believes because God gives him faith and then credits that faith to Abram's righteousness.

Epistle (Hebrews 11:1-16). Verse 1 defines just exactly what faith is. Verses 2-12 are examples of people of faith and how they displayed their faith. Verses 13-16 might be considered a sort of parenthesis because verses 17-19 return to the theme of Abraham. These verses might be used as a text on the occasion of the death of a Christian. OT saints looked forward to the fulfillment of promises in time and therefore looked forward to everlasting life. NT Christians look forward to the fulfillment of promises after death and therefore look forward to everlasting life. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Gospel (Luke 12:22-34). This reading, too, has a theme of faith. There are ten imperatives in this text. Of these ten imperatives, eight have to do with material possessions (the two in 12:29–30 deal with possessions in relation to the kingdom), and the remaining two are solely about the kingdom (12:31–32). Since possessions can become a significant distraction for the disciples, Jesus addresses their attitude toward them directly in relation to the kingdom. "Life," Jesus says, "is more than food and the body more than clothing" (12:23). (CC)

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Genesis 15:1-6

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."² But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

15:1 I am your shield. In other parts of Scripture "shield" takes the meaning of king. A good king took care of all the needs of those who served and provided protection in time of trouble. God was not only a good king but the perfect king and so he provided Abram as he does us with all that we need, especially the righteousness earned for us by Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

15:2 Eliezer of Damascus. A servant born and raised in Abram's household (v. 3); may be the loyal servant in chapter 24. Despite his qualifications as someone Abram might adopt as heir, Eliezer is by no means preferable to the natural-born son God had promised. (Babylonian documents describe laws regulating adoption of heirs.) (TLSB)

15:5 So shall your offspring be. Hebrew is singular sometimes translated “seed.” Christ is ultimately the promised Seed (Gal. 3:16), who points to the abundance He produces by His death and resurrection (cf John 12:24). (TLSB)

15:6 counted. To think, reckon, or account. Because God’s mercy and grace, for Jesus’ sake, He considers our sins forgiven. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Hebrews 11:1-16

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ²This is what the ancients were commended for. ³By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. ⁴By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. ⁵By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. ⁷By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. ⁸By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹²And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. ¹³All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. ¹⁴People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

11:1 faith. It is the confident trust in the unseen reality of God’s present help. It occurs 24 times in this chapter. Only by faith are we in a right relationship with God. Only by faith can man live according to the invisible realities of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

11:2 the ancients. Scripture testifies that the OT saints are righteous and pleasing to God. (TLSB)

11:10 city with foundations. Speaks of permanence in contrast to the tents in which the patriarch lived (v. 9). This city is “the heavenly Jerusalem” (12:22), “the city that is to come” (13:14) and “the new Jerusalem” (Rev 21:2–4, 9–27). (CSB)

GOSPEL – Luke 12:22-34

²²Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁵Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? ²⁶Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the

rest? ²⁷ “Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. ³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

12:25 Undue worry subtracts from life. (TLSB)

12:29 do not set your heart on. Do not make this your priority. (TLSB)

12:31 seek his kingdom. God’s kingdom exists wherever He rules hearts and minds. We “seek” it by having Him and His ways hold sway in our lives. (TLSB)

12:33 give to the poor. A radical call to use our goods not only for ourselves but also to help other people. (TLSB)

12:34 there your heart will be also. In the Bible the heart of the center of our being which includes our personality and priorities. We will treasure what has the highest priority for us.

12:28 thrown into oven. Burned as fuel for heating and cooking. (TLSB)