

Notes for Next Sunday

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9). God desires to dwell among His people, but a holy God cannot live among an unholy people. So God lovingly establishes His ordinances, including the Ten Commandments. Through the Word, the Lord leads us to faith and to keep His commands faithfully; He shows forth His blessings in our lives.

Epistle (Ephesians 6:10-20). This famous picture sums up the Letter. The armor represents both a promise of divine protection and an exhortation to battle. Like a general encouraging his troops, Paul tells us that the victory is certain because Christ has already won the war, and He has made us well-prepared to stand with Him to face any last-ditch assaults. In ancient legends, the weapons and armor of a hero could give certain victory to anyone who wore them. The armor Paul describes is not simply from God; it is God's own armor, what He Himself wore in battle. Dressed in Christ's armor, we look remarkably like Christ. (TLSB)

Gospel (Mark 7:14-23). Jesus teaches that people are not defiled by food or other things entering the body from the outside, but rather by their own evil inclinations and sinful behaviors. This teaching exposes the uselessness of our own excuse-making and dismisses our claims that other people and things are to blame for our shortcomings and failures. However, Jesus does not merely condemn; He also sets free. Through His promises we are liberated from sin and reconciled to God.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – 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. ²Do 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. ⁶Observe 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.” ⁷What 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? ⁸And 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? ⁹Only 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.

4:1 Hear ... O Israel. This is an imperative that serves as an attention-grabbing summons when he wants Israel to receive in faith the Word that will establish, commission, and empower them as his covenant people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

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)

4:6 observe them carefully. Along with a knowledge of what the Lord wanted, the Spirit of God also gave His people willing hearts to respond to His commands. (PBC)

4:6 nations who will hear. The Israelites could observe them and follow them, and the nations around would see and be drawn to their God through them. Jesus taught the same thing: “You are the light of the

world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ... Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16). (PBC)

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. (CSB)

4:9 do not forget. The first generation of Israelites quickly forgot God’s powerful Sinai sermon. Moses urges them to learn this lesson from their parents and pass it on to the next generation. (PBC)

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.

6:10 strong ... power. The verb is better taken as a passive: “be made powerful.” The means of this strengthening are to be found in the vital energy which comes from union with Christ. (IB)

6:11 put on. Baptismal language (4:24). (TLSB)

6:11 full armor. 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 stand against. The picture is defensive; Christ defends us against the devil on our behalf. (TLSB)

6:12 not against flesh and blood. A caution against lashing out against human opponents as though they were the real enemy and also against assuming that the battle can be fought using merely human resources. (CSB)

6:14 belt of truth. A belt holds loose clothing in preparation for moving quickly. 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. Arrows 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. The helmet both protected the soldier and provided a striking symbol of military victory. (CSB)

6:17 sword of the Spirit. The term refers to the sharp, short sword for close combat. The Spirit gives the Gospel Word its effectiveness. Luther sang of the devil, "One little Word can fell him." (TLSB)

6:18 pray in the Spirit. Reminders that the battle is spiritual and must be fought in God's strength, depending on the word and on God through prayer. (CSB)

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.'"

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. (Lane)

7:19 into his heart. Ritually impure food does not touch the heart and so cannot contaminate it. (TLSB)

7:19 declared all foods clean. Jesus' teaching will affect the future Christian mission. Simply put, Gentiles will not need to observe Jewish dietary laws. The question of food laws caused much controversy in the first-century Church. (TLSB)

7:23 evils. The word for "evil" used in verse 21 usually denotes an evil condition. The word used for "evil" in this verse denotes something that is actively evil. All the items mentioned in verses 21-22 are called "active evils." It all begins in the heart. (Buls)