

Notes for Next Sunday

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 29:11-19). In this reading, God through Isaiah is telling His people that they have denied Him. They have rejected God so long that they have become totally deaf to everything that God would have them learn. They made up their own religion and are not interested in the Word.

Epistle (Ephesians 5:22-33). If we say with Paul that the husband is the “head” in a marriage, then we may say the wife is the “heart.” Is one more important? No, both heart and head are necessary for life. We are inclined today to view our marriages selfishly: what can I get out of it? Instead, we should consider what we can offer to our spouse and see behind each action a picture of the Gospel itself.

Gospel (Mark 7:1-13). Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for being overly concerned with man-made observances while failing to fulfill God’s Commandments. Such hypocrisy still abounds, as most people worry more about human opinions than what God thinks. Given our own failures in this regard, it is a good thing that the Lord not only commands in His Word, but also graciously forgives and promises goodness.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 29:11-19

¹¹For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say to him, “Read this, please,” he will answer, “I can’t; it is sealed.”¹² Or if you give the scroll to someone who cannot read, and say, “Read this, please,” he will answer, “I don’t know how to read.”¹³ The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.¹⁴ Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish.”¹⁵ Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, “Who sees us? Who will know?”¹⁶ You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, “He did not make me”? Can the pot say of the potter, “He knows nothing”?¹⁷ In a very short time, will not Lebanon be turned into a fertile field and the fertile field seem like a forest?¹⁸ In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.¹⁹ Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

29:11 vision.† See 1:1 and note. Because of their hardness of heart, unbelieving Israelites will not be able to understand the vision described by the prophet. (CSB)

29:11 a book that is sealed. A prose explanation of the poetry of vv 9–10. Because Judah’s actions deeply offended the Lord, He will no longer allow Judah to see or understand what He is doing. (TLSB)

29:13 come near to me with their mouth. Jesus quoted this verse to expose the hypocritical recitation of religious formulas. (TLSB)

29:15 woe. Isaiah pronounces a woe, or death lament, on those who think they can hide their plans from the Lord. (TLSB)

29:16 potter. Imagery that dates back to the account of God forming Adam (Gn 2:7). For the clay to command the potter turns things upside down, making the creature the Creator. (TLSB)

29:17 fertile field seem like a forest. What seems impressive among the nations will be sharply reduced in stature; what looks unimpressive will be far more highly esteemed. All this implies the eschatological future. (Leupold)

29:18 deaf will hear ... blind will see.† Linked with the Messianic age. (CSB)

EPISTLE – Ephesians 5:22-33

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

5:22 Wives, submit.† An aspect of the mutual submission taught in v. 21. To submit meant to yield one's own rights. It is a relationship that grows out of Christian faith and encourages mutual love. (CSB)

5:22 as to the Lord. Does not put a woman's husband in the place of the Lord, but shows rather that a woman ought to submit to her husband as an act of submission to the Lord. (CSB)

5:23 head of the wife. Headship is not tyranny, but pictures one's leader and source. If we think of the husband as the head of a marriage and the wife as the heart of a marriage (Paul uses “body”), we see that one is not more important than the other – neither can survive alone. Paul demonstrates their vital yet distinct roles. (TLSB)

5:23 as Christ. The church's submitting to Christ is not a demeaning thing but something that brings great blessing. Such is the case also in a marriage where the wife accepts the headship of her husband. (PBC)

5:24 Husbands. Paul now shows that this is not a one-sided submission, but a reciprocal relationship. (CSB)

5:27 radiant...without stain...wrinkle. Without stain from the outside or wrinkle developed on the inside. (PBC)

5:27 holy and blameless. The white robe of Baptism is pictured as a wedding gown. Notably, the Bridegroom Himself prepares the Bride. (TLSB)

5:29 feeds and cares for. This is an explanation. It introduces an axiom. It is quite plain that Paul is comparing a man in his physical dealing with himself, and Christ Who deals with the Church in a spiritual way. The words stress the natural role, not the exception. The masochist would be an exception. There are people who enjoy harm to their own bodies. They are not natural. (Buls)

5:33 However each one love ... respect. That love is one that loses itself in another, that sacrifices itself. It is a love that is willing to die for another. (LL)

GOSPEL – Mark 7:1-13

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and² saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were “unclean,” that is, unwashed.³ (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴ When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.⁵ So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with ‘unclean’ hands?” ⁶ He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ”‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁷ They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ ⁸ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.” ⁹ And he said to them: “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death. ¹¹ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban’ (that is, a gift devoted to God), ¹² then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. ¹³ Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”

7:1 The Pharisees ... had come down from Jerusalem. Another delegation of fact-finding religious leaders from Jerusalem sent to investigate the Galilean activities of Jesus. (CSB)

7:2 unwashed. This was not so much an issue of hygiene, but of ritual observance. (TLSB)

7:4 marketplace. Where Jews would come into contact with Gentiles, or with Jews who did not observe the ceremonial law, and thus become ceremonially unclean. (CSB)

7:6 Isaiah ... prophesied. Isaiah roundly denounced the religious leaders of his day, and Jesus uses a quotation from this prophet to describe the tradition of the elders as “rules taught by men.” (CSB)

7:7 worshiped. "Worship" here denotes the entire religious worship of heart, mouth and deed. The tense of the verb denotes a continuous and customary action. (Buls)

7:8 the commands of God ... the traditions of men. Jesus' rebuke is aimed particularly at the Pharisees' elevation of human tradition above divine commandment. (TLSB)

7:11 Corban. By using this word in a religious vow an irresponsible Jewish son could formally dedicate to God (i.e., to the temple) his earnings that otherwise would have gone for the support of his parents. The money, however, did not necessarily have to go for religious purposes. The Corban formula was simply a means of circumventing the clear responsibility of children toward their parents as prescribed in the law. The teachers of the law held that the Corban oath was binding, even when uttered rashly. The practice was one of many traditions that adhered to the letter of the law while ignoring its spirit. (CSB)

7:13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition. A mere appearance of piety does not please God. He prefers that people simply obey His Commandments. (TLSB)