

Notes for Next Sunday

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Genesis 9:8-17). After the fearsome yearlong experience on the ark, God reassures Noah and his family that He will never again send a universal flood. As time would soon tell and continues to tell, no amount of amazing rescues and rainbow sightings can keep humankind, including God's own people, from falling into sin. But God is faithful to His covenants, even when people are not. The message of every rainbow tells us He is faithful to His promise to provide a Savior.

Epistle (Ephesians 3:14-21). As Paul considers God's wisdom, grace, and love, he breaks out in prayer and praise. Study of God's Word naturally combines with prayer and praise in the Divine Service, where Christ's gifts are given out, and we receive them with thanksgiving.

Gospel (Mark 6:46-56). Not long after Jesus' disciples failed to recognize an unmistakable display of His divinity, the people of Gennesaret show great faith by receiving Jesus and clamoring for His healing power. Even today, those new to the faith often exhibit more conviction than those who have known Jesus for a long time. It is good news, then, that Jesus remains devoted to us even when our commitment wavers or fails. His resolve to suffer and die for all is ample proof of that.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Genesis 9:8-17

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” ¹⁷ So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

9:9 I now establish my covenant. God's covenants are unilateral; He obligates Himself to observe the terms of His own contract (here a reassurance of flood's survivors after their fearsome experience). (TLSB)

9:11 Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood. Regions may be devastated; people and animals may be swept away by floods. But never again will a flood be universal. (TLSB)

9:13 rainbow. In addition to assuring them with words that He would never send another flood, God gave them a visible sign as a seal of the truthfulness of His promise. (PBC)

9:16 everlasting covenant. While this covenant will last only until the end of time, it is also associated with God's covenant relationship with His chosen people. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom his whole family ^a in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

3:14 I kneel. The normal Jewish and early Christian posture for prayer was standing (Mt. 6:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11). Kneeling for prayer (Dan. 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 9:40) suggests submission and worship (Phil. 2:10) (TLSB)

3:15 family. Best renders by “he who is the true Father of all who are children.” The family on earth – Christians – in heaven it includes the angels and saints. (Stoekhardt)

3:16 his glorious riches. God’s standard of giving is liberal, bountiful, overflowing. An image of the riches of his glory is seen in the starry heavens, which proclaim at once the vast riches and surpassing glory of God. Or in the beautiful appearance of an autumn sunset, where the whole sky is fleshed with clouds brightened into a sea of glory. (PC)

3:16 inner being. This is our mind and our heart. It is our conscience, our will, and our commitments. The actions we take, as Jesus said, flow from the inside out (Luke 6:43-45). (LL)

3:17 dwell. Since baptized Christians are in Christ, Christ dwells by the Spirit in them. Paul’s prayer is that He would continue to dwell in them, and that they would trust in Him. (TLSB)

3:18 to grasp. The highest knowledge of God is not personal achievement. It is given to the community of believers and is available only to the individuals who share in the life of that community. We are not plugged into God on our own private wire.

3:19 surpasses knowledge. The immeasurability of God’s wisdom and Christ’s love. Knowledge of Christ is praised in the Letter, but the human mind cannot fully comprehend Him. (TLSB)

3:20 immeasurably more. God’s giving is not limited by our asking. He is like an eternal, unending fountain. The more it pours forth and overflows, the more it continues to give. God desires nothing more seriously from us than that we ask Him for much and great things. (TLSB)

3:21 glory. Yes, in the Church dwells the glory of God, resounds the praise of God, not in the outer-Christian world. The Church thanks God with hearts and hands and voices, with its entire existence for the great things which He has done and daily does unto it. (Stoekhardt)

GOSPEL – Mark 6:45-56

⁴⁵ Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. ⁴⁷ When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. ⁴⁸ He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” ⁵¹ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely

amazed,⁵² for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.⁵³ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there.⁵⁴ As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus.⁵⁵ They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.⁵⁶ And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

6:45 go on ahead of him. John indicates that the people were ready to take Jesus by force and make him king (Jn 6:14–15), and Jesus therefore sent his disciples across the lake while he slipped away into the hills to pray. (CSB)

6:47 in the middle of the lake. They were completely off course because they were facing a strong head wind. It was so contrary that they had taken down the sail and picked up the oars. And even that had brought them nowhere on the stormy lake. They were in real danger. (PBC)

6:48 fourth watch. 3:00–6:00 A.M. The disciples had been in the boat for a long time, fighting with the wind for almost the whole night. (TLSB)

6:48 walking on the lake. A special display of the majestic presence and power of the transcendent Lord, who rules over the sea. (CSB)

6:49 a ghost. Popular Jewish superstition held that the appearance of spirits during the night brought disaster. The disciples' terror was prompted by what they may have thought was a water spirit. (CSB)

6:50 take courage! It is I, don't be afraid. This posess the significance as the recognized formula of self-revelation which rests ultimately on the "I am that I am" (Ex. 3:14). The admonitions to "take heart" and to "have no fear" introduce and conclude the "I am He" are an integral part of the divines formula of self-revelation. (Lane)

6:51 Wind died down. He then climbed over the side of the boat into their midst, whereupon the wind immediately stopped. The effect of this double miracle on the disciples, wrought up as they had been by their fear, was such as to bring them almost out of their senses for astonishment. (Kretzmann)

6:51 were completely amazed. They were undoubtedly physically drained from their rowing against a strong head-wind and emotionally drained from their experience of terror. They had no categories for understanding Jesus' presence with them in the boat. They were utterly astonished. (Lane)

6:52 they had not understood about the loaves. Had they understood the feeding of the 5,000, they would not have been amazed at Jesus' walking on the water or his calming the waves. (CSB)

6:52 their hearts were hardened. It is somewhat surprising that Jesus describes the disciples and His opponents in the same way. The disciples' lack of comprehension will only worsen in the coming chapters. Jesus' predictions of His death will prove most difficult for them to grasp. (TLSB)

6:54 people recognized Jesus. Note how starkly this picture contrasts with the depiction of the disciples in vv. 50-51. The Twelve's hardened hearts had just failed to see Jesus' divine nature, even after He had multiplied the loaves and walked on the water. (TLSB)

6:56 carried the sick. Instead of the usual goods on the market, Jesus found a multitude of desperately ill people, all asking for His touch and healing. The numerous healings here in Gennesaret contrast with the few that were healed in Nazareth (6:5-6). (TLSB)