

Notes for Next Sunday

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Jeremiah 23:1-6). The prophet Jeremiah lived at the end of the period of the monarchy, through the destruction of Jerusalem, and into the beginning of the exile. The failure of Judah's kings and priests to be faithful to the teaching of God or to receive the message that God sent through Jeremiah and other prophets is a significant theme in the Book of Jeremiah and provides the background for our Old Testament Reading.

Epistle (Ephesians 2:11-22). Notions of favoritism divided the earliest Christian churches and still affect our churches today. Paul urges all of us to remember who we were apart from Christ and to rejoice in what Christ has made us to be: His one Body.

Gospel (Mark 6:30-44). When a multitude of Jesus' followers have far too little food for all to eat, Jesus multiplies five loaves and two fishes so that all are satisfied. When problems threaten us and needs overwhelm our resources, what is our reaction? Do we turn first to the Lord? We should, as His Word makes clear, for He still treats His flock with compassion and more than provides for every need of body and soul.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Jeremiah 23:1-6

“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. ²Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: “Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done,” declares the LORD. ³“I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. ⁴I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD. ⁵“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.

23:1-2 Arraignment of the wicked shepherds extends into the opening verses of ch 23. God will punish them as they deserve for neglect of their duties. (TLSB)

23:2 bestowed care ... bestow punishment. The leaders of the Israelites, including the false prophets and the unfaithful priests, are to blame for scattering of the flock instead of gathering them around God's Word and sacrifices at the temple. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

23:4 I will place shepherds. Men like Ezra and Nehemiah.

23:4 be afraid ... terrified. Sheep that were left unattended were fair game for any wild animal or other predator. Being properly cared for would relieve that anxiety.

23:5 days are coming. The language and concepts of the prophecy range back and forth between preliminary and final fulfillment, between shadow and the substance of what is to come. (TLSB)

23:5 *branch*. The Lord will shape history so that “the days are coming” when He will establish His messianic kingdom on earth. From the root of David’s lineage, He will let spring forth a branch, or descendant. Unlike Israel’s kings, He is righteous in His person. As indicated by His name, His subjects will also derive a unique benefit from His reign. For claiming His merits before the judgment seat of God, they, the unrighteous, will be declared righteous. (TLSB)

23:6 *Judah ... and Israel*. Israel and Judah, reunited to become one nation, are a pledge of the spiritual unity of the messianic kingdom. Saved from extinction in Babylon, the people of Israel foreshadow the perfect bliss awaiting the new Israel, the Church. The rule of good shepherds reaches its fullness when Jesus Christ will effect justice and righteousness (v 5). (TLSB)

23:6 *The LORD Our Righteousness*. † Although Zedekiah did not live up to the meaning of his name, “The LORD is my righteousness,” Jesus the Messiah would make it possible for his subjects to be accounted righteous in God’s sight and thus be saved and live in safety. (CSB)

EPISTLE – Ephesians 2:11-22

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. ¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

2:12 *separate from Christ ... without God*. Before Christ Gentiles had no promise of a Messiah, no legacy of prophets foretelling the Promised One. For Gentiles, schooled in Greek thought, history was a matter of cycles going nowhere. The Hebrew notion of a linear history with a plan and terminus was foreign to Greeks. For them history would cycle and recycle, destined to repetition and redundancy. (LL)

2:12 *without God*. Though they worshiped many gods, they did not worship the one true God. (TLSB)

2:13 *have been brought near*. The verb “brought” here is passive. The Gentiles did not do anything on their own to approach God. (PBC)

2:14 *He Himself is our peace*. Not just absence of war, but well-being, unity, and salvation. Christ makes peace and is also the place where it is found. (TLSB)

2:14 *barrier ... dividing wall*. In Herod’s temple at Jerusalem, a wall separated the (inner) court of the Jews from the (outer) court of the Gentiles. Paul was arrested on the charge of violating this boundary. Here, it symbolizes the Law. In Christ, Jews and Gentiles are no longer divided in their worship of God or reception of His gifts. (TLSB)

2:15 dogs. The Jews utterly despised the Gentiles; they considered them dogs, vile, unclean. One must know the status of dogs in the Orient. The Gentiles reciprocated in kind and hated the Jews because of their arrogance, their scornful separation, their peculiar religious laws and ways. (Lenski)

2:22 dwelling. God certainly dwells in individual believers (1 Cor. 6:19), but here Paul emphasizes the corporate nature of the Church, which together is God's temple. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 6:30-44

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” ³²So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. ³⁵By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. ³⁶Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take eight months of a man’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” ³⁸“How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.” ³⁹Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

6:30 reported to him all they had done and taught. Because he had commissioned them as his representatives. They were returning from a third preaching tour in Galilee. (CSB)

6:32 quiet place. Jesus brings the Twelve to an isolated place, away from the crowds. He probably did this in order to provide a time of rest for the apostles and debrief them after their just-completed mission. (TLSB)

6:34 compassion. When Jesus saw the great crowd, he had compassion—he felt deep emotional concern for the people and their needs. They needed a shepherd to feed and lead them, to rescue them from danger and death, to guide them to life with God.

6:37 eight months of a man’s wages. Keep in mind that Philip has been forcing out demons and healing the sick (Mark 6:13). We’d expect him to be optimistic. A bit of faith would be appropriate. After all, he had just spent several weeks seeing the impossible happen. He can recite the stats, but can’t see how to help.

6:39 green grass. Grass is green around the Sea of Galilee after the late winter or early spring rains. (CSB)

6:42 all ate and were satisfied. The Lord’s superabundant provision was such that, despite the overwhelming number of people, no one went away hungry. (TLSB)

6:44 five thousand men. The size of the crowd is amazing in light of the fact that the neighboring towns of Capernaum and Bethsaida probably had a population of only 2,000–3,000 each. (CSB)