

Notes for Next Sunday

Second Sunday a Christmas

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (1 Kings 3:4-15). In return for Solomon's selfless request for wisdom, God blesses him, not only with wisdom, but also with riches and honor. May we, like Solomon, recognize that we do not deserve the wonderful opportunities God gives us. Because of our human limitations, we are unable to perfectly fulfill the challenges we face. Yet, in Christ, we have forgiveness; we are a new creation and can do all things through Him who gives us strength and wisdom.

Epistle (Ephesians 1:3-14). All one sentence in Greek, this section is often called a "doxology" because it recites what God has done and is an expression of worship to honor him. Paul speaks first of the blessings we have through the Father (v. 3), then of those that come through the Son (vv. 4–13a) and finally of those through the Holy Spirit (1:13b–14). Paul directs the Ephesians away from themselves, teaching them to trust in God's promises in Christ. Pride tempts us to trust in our commitment to God; doubt makes us worry that we are not committed enough. Jesus blesses us spiritually by leading us to repent of sinful pride by the Law and calming our worried hearts through the Gospel.

Gospel (Luke 2:40-52). Jesus matures as a normal child and also has the blessings of God's wisdom and favor. Today, pray for the children in your family or neighborhood, that they would grow in the knowledge of their Savior and receive His favor. He who has blessed and kept you in faith will likewise hear and bless them too. Luke's account of Jesus' birth and childhood repeatedly sets the ordinary beside the miraculous (e.g., a youth from the hinterland stuns the Jerusalem rabbis with His wisdom). Given the mysterious and often apparently ordinary ways God chooses to reveal Himself and His salvation—in the flesh of His Son, in words, in water, in bread and wine—we easily underestimate their power. Thankfully, the very common aspects of God's gifts mean that they are never far from us.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – 1 Kings 3:4-15

⁴The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." ⁶Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. ⁷"Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" ¹⁰The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ¹¹So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, ¹²I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. ¹³Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. ¹⁴And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life." ¹⁵Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem,

stood before the ark of the Lord's covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.

3:6 kindness. The Hebrew for this word refers to God's covenant favors (see note on 2Sa 7:15). Solomon is praising the Lord for faithfulness to his promises to David (2Sa 7:8–16). (CSB)

3:7 I am only a little child. Figure of speech to express lack of experience. Solomon actually had a child of his own at this time. (TLSB)

3:9 a discerning heart. This is “hearing or listening heart.” This is much more than a request for the proverbial wisdom “to listen twice as much as we speak because we have two ears and only one mouth.” This is godly listening, to listen first to God and his Word and then to act. This request is for spiritual discernment. Solomon acknowledges that true wisdom and understanding come from God alone. If he is to faithfully govern the people of God, he must always look to God for guidance and strength. Then and only then will he be a wise and faithful king. (Concordia Pupil Resources – Volume 12, part 3)

3:11 asked for discernment. Jesus once said, “Seek first His [God's] kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things [food, drink, clothing] will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). That is what happened here. (PBC)

3:15 held a great celebration. Rejoicing is the expression of people who have renewed their commitment to the Lord, confessed their sin (see 12:19) and been given a king. (CSB)

EPISTLE – Ephesians 1:3-14

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. ¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

1:3 blessed. The word means more than “happy,” because happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. “Blessed” here refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God. (CSB-Mt) (CSB)

1:3 heavenly realms. Could also be stated “heavenly matters.” A common phrase in Ephesians which is concerned with the ultimate battle between God's forces and the devil's. (TLSB)

1:3 Spiritual blessings. God blesses us physically and spiritually. Here Paul likely refers to the blessings given through the Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

1:3 in Christ. This phrase (or one like it) occurs 12 times in vv. 3–12. It refers to the spiritual union of Christ with believers, which Paul often symbolizes by the metaphor “body of Christ.” (CSB)

1:4 chose. Divine election is a constant theme in Paul’s letters (Ro 8:29–33; 9:6–26; 11:5, 7, 28; 16:13; Col 3:12; 1Th 1:4; 2Th 2:13; Tit 1:1). In this chapter it is emphasized in the following ways: (1) “he chose us” (here); (2) “he predestined us” (v. 5); (3) “we were also chosen” (v. 11); (4) “having been predestined” (v. 11). (CSB)

1:4 before the creation of the world. Before we came into being, even before the foundation of the world was laid, God had thought of us in grace, and had his thoughts, in his purpose and council, taken us out of the world, out of lose, condemned mankind, had claimed and secured us for himself, had firmly resolved that we should always be and remain his own and live with him eternally. (Stoeckhardt)

1:4 holy and blameless. Not a description of our morality as seen by the world, but our status in God’s eyes. As Christ is holy and blameless, the perfect sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 7:26; 9:14), we, too, are made holy and blameless by forgiveness through His blood (Eph. 1:7). (TLSB)

1:6 freely given us. Through the grace of God in Jesus, whose entire work is an expression of the love of God toward us, we become both the objects and the recipients of His love. (Buls)

1:7 redemption. Payment made to free a slave or captive - a common picture for salvation in the NT, evoking the exodus (Ex. 15:13; Luke 1:68). (TLSB)

1:8 lavished us. In a million years we would not have devised such a plan. Rather, God devised it. (TLSB)

1:9 mystery. Paul defines the mystery primarily as Jesus Himself, whom God revealed as the Messiah to the apostles and prophets, and whom they revealed to the world in their preaching (TLSB)

1:10 to bring ... under one head. Because Jesus is both God and man, humankind and God are reconciled in Him. Because all who are baptized are “in Christ,” they are also reconciled to one another, whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free. (TLSB)

1:11 In him. Christ is the center of God’s plan. Whether the universe or the individual Christian is in view, it is only in relationship to Christ that there is a meaningful future destiny. Paul goes on to speak, not of the world as a whole, but of those who respond to God’s call. (CSB)

1:11 marked ... with a seal. Baptized. A seal marked ownership. (TLSB)

1:14 deposit. The Holy Spirit is the down payment, the earnest money, of our heavenly inheritance. The Holy Spirit brought us to faith and, as Martin Luther put it in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, The Holy Spirit “keeps us in the one true faith.” In other words, we are secure. Our place in heaven is guaranteed. A deposit has been made. Our reservation is confirmed in the ongoing presence and power of the Spirit in our lives. (LL)

GOSPEL – Luke 2:40-52

⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. ⁴¹ Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. ⁴³ After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began

looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.” ⁴⁹ “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

2:42 twelve years old. Twelve years have passed since the previous episode. Remarkably, vv 41–52 is the only NT account of Jesus’ later childhood. (TLSB)

2:43 after the feast was over. The two feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread lasted a total of 7 days. According to Jewish tradition, pilgrims were only required to stay 2 days, but Joseph and Mary fulfilled the entire period. During this time, Jesus may have established a routine of being out of sight of his parents, which could have included his spending time in the temple with the rabbis. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

2:46 three days. One day traveling away from Jerusalem, a second traveling back and a third looking for him. (CSB)

2:46 the teachers. The rabbis, experts in Judaism. (CSB)

2:48 they were astonished. Immediately following the amazement of those in the temple, Luke uses an even stronger word for the astonishment of Jesus’ parents, who are struck that Jesus is in the temple with such an audience surrounding him and listening to his answers and his wisdom. (CC)

2:48 in my Father’s house. Jesus pointed to his personal duty to his Father in heaven. He contrasted his “my Father” with Mary’s “Your father” (v. 48). At 12 years of age he was aware of his unique relationship to God. But he was also obedient to his earthly parents (v. 51). (CSB)

2:51 was obedient to them. Jesus’ obedience to his parents is part of his active obedience. The periphrastic construction implies continual obedience. He let himself be placed in the proper divine ordering of the family. (CC)

2:52 And Jesus grew. Although Jesus was God, there is no indication that he had all knowledge and wisdom from birth. He seems to have matured like any other boy. (CSB)