

Notes for Next Sunday

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Genesis 2:18-25). This is a more detailed account of creation, focusing on the creation of humankind. It ends by emphasizing that Adam and Eve are not ashamed—they have nothing to be ashamed of. Too often, we are not ashamed because in our spiritual pride we refuse to acknowledge the shameful of our thoughts, words, and deeds. One of the reasons that God gave His Law was to teach us shame, to show us our sinfulness and need of forgiveness. There can be no true repentance without the experience of shame. However, in Jesus Christ, God heals our shame, not by allowing us to deny it but by taking our shameful upon Himself and declaring us to be without shame in Him (1Jn 2:28).

Epistle (Hebrews 2:1-13). In verses 1-4 Christians are warned of their need God's Word, spoken by Jesus and attested by those who heard Him. The Father and the Holy Spirit also bear witness. Ignoring God's revelation of how to be saved is frightening. Jesus gives the Church pastors, teachers, and other leaders to spread the Word. He likewise gives us brothers and sisters to encourage us in our life of faith. He will always provide all that is needed to receive the gift of life. In verses 5-13 points to Jesus, as true man, willingly humbled Himself to taste death. As resurrected Lord, and as our firstborn Brother (v 11), He serves as our High Priest to intercede for us before the Father. Without a Savior, we would live in slavery to the fear of death. But Jesus has taken the consequence of our sin and removes our fear. Knowing our weaknesses, He will always help us when we are tempted.

Gospel (Mark 10:2-16). Jesus teaches that God wants a man and a woman in marriage to be exclusively committed to each other for life. Attempts to alter or get around God's good intentions bring condemnation, not greater liberty. Thoughtfully and prayerfully embrace God's ways. What He establishes is for our good and stems from His love and grace. The story of the small children is the key to the chapter, showing us that salvation is a gift of grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We trust the Lord as a child trusts a parent. We do not earn God's love and favor by keeping the Law, especially when we look for loopholes to excuse our sinful behavior (cf 10:1-12). All people, like helpless children, receive Jesus' blessing and enter the Kingdom through faith in Him.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Genesis 2:18-25

¹⁸The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” ¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” ²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. ²⁵The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

2:18 not good ... to be alone. Being alone is the first thing that God describes as “not good.” Not moral fault (or evil) but incompleteness. At this point, God's work of creation was not complete with respect to man. He had no mate appropriate to him and no means of procreation. (TLSB)

2:18 make a helper. “Helper” means “supporter, enabler.” The word does not imply inferiority, as if God made women to be slaves to men or solely to improve men’s quality of life. God himself is said to supply “help” for us in Ps 121:1–2 (using the same Hebrew root), and God certainly is not inferior to man! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

2:19 name them. His first act of dominion over the creatures around him. (CSB)

2:21 fall into a deep sleep. Hebrew implies something more than normal sleep. God sometimes brought a special sleep upon a person for a specific purpose (cf. Is. 29:10). (TLSB)

2:21 one of man’s ribs. Hebrew word is commonly used for a structural component related to the side of something. When used of a building, it may mean a pillar, beam, or plank of wood. When used of a person, it generally means a rib bone. (TLSB)

2:23 Adam called his wife woman. The manner in which, and the object for which woman was made show that the husband and wife should love each other with tender affection; cultivate union of views, interest, and effort; and mutually seek each other’s highest good. (Concordia Bible)

2:24 leave his father and mother. Instead of remaining under the protective custody of his parents a man leaves them and, with his wife, establishes a new family unit. (CSB)

2:24 united ... one flesh. The divine intention for husband and wife was monogamy. Together they were to form an inseparable union, of which “one flesh” is both a sign and an expression. (CSB)

2:25 naked ... no shame. Freedom from shame, signifying moral innocence, would soon be lost as a result of sin. (CSB)

EPISTLE – Hebrews 2:1-13

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. ²For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, ³how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. ⁴God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. ⁵It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. ⁶But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁷You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor ⁸and put everything under his feet.” In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. ⁹But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. ¹²He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.” ¹³And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again he says, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

2:3 such a great salvation. The argument here is from the lesser to the greater, and assumes that the gospel is greater than the law. Thus, if disregard for the law brought certain punishment, disregard for the gospel will bring even greater punishment. (CSB)

2:4 God also bore witness. The Father and the Holy Spirit attested to the message of salvation, first spoken in its fullness by Jesus (v 3). (TLSB)

2:4 signs, wonders and various miracles. Signs put stress on the meaning of the miracles. The miracles were not to be pointless displays, but pointers to Christ. (PBC)

2:5 It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come. Angels oversee the nations of this world. But the Son has authority over the whole of creation and time, including the angels. (TLSB)

2:8 everything. By faith alone, we confess Jesus' authority over our own lives and His authority over all things, even though life may seem out of control. (TLSB)

2:9 made lower than the angels. Before His resurrection and ascension, Jesus did not always choose to demonstrate His divine power and so appeared lower than the angels. By taking the form of a servant, He appeared to be less authoritative than those glorious beings who are upheld by His Word (1:3). (TLSB)

2:9 Jesus ... now crowned with glory and honor. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, His true status as God's Son was revealed to the sinful world, and God the Father exalted Him. (TLSB)

2:9 might taste death for everyone. Jesus' death has drained the cup of sin and death that poisoned every person. (TLSB)

2:11 who makes men holy ... who are made holy. Christ became man to identify himself with man and, by his substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, to restore the holiness man had lost. (CSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 10:2-16

²Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” ³“What did Moses command you?” he replied. ⁴They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” ⁵“It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. ⁶“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ⁷‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,⁸ and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” ¹⁰When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹²And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.” ¹³People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” ¹⁶And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

10:2 Is it lawful ... to divorce his wife? The question of the Pharisees was not a sincere one. They were trying to trap Jesus into saying something they could use to discredit Him. The divorce question was made to order, since they themselves were not agreed on the proper interpretation of Moses' words. Those who followed Rabbi Shammai said the only reason for divorce was moral indecency; those who followed Hillel said anything in a wife that did not please the husband was grounds for divorce. They expected Jesus to side with one or the other, and they would then have the opportunity to criticize Him publicly. (PBC)

10:5 because your hearts were hard. Divorce was an accommodation to human weakness and was used to bring order in a society that had disregarded God's will, but it was not the standard God had originally intended, as vv. 6–9 clearly indicate. The purpose of Dt 24:1 was not to make divorce acceptable, but to reduce the hardship of its consequences. (CSB)

10:6 at the beginning of creation. Jesus goes back to the time before human sin to show God's original intention. God instituted marriage as a great unifying blessing, bonding the male and female in his creation. (CSB)

10:8 no longer two, but one. "Two will become one" rules out divorce and polygamy. "One flesh" is applied only to marriage, to no other human relationship. (Buls)

10:13 little children. *Paidion* may denote any dependent child, from an infant to the 12-year-old girl whom Jesus raised.

10:14 let the little children come...hinder them not. With a double command, Jesus ordered the disciples to cease their interference. The first command implies an immediate reversal of their prior conduct: "Allow/permit the children to come to me (now)." The second is present, implying a command that continues in force: "Never again hinder them!" The disciples' Law was countered with Jesus' loving Gospel voice, which allows all of us to run to Him, trust Him, depend upon Him, and love Him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

10:15 receive the kingdom of heaven. Though Jesus was speaking directly to his disciples, the truth is universal. Whoever you are, to enter the kingdom, you must become as a little child—not in the sense of "innocence" (as if children were sinless) or ignorance, but in simple trust in, and dependence on, the Father's care. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)