

Notes for Next Sunday

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Zephaniah 1:7-16). God's day of wrath would come swiftly on the people of Judah because of their materialism, worldliness, and general disobedience. The final Day of Judgment will likewise come unexpectedly, as a thief in the night (1Th 5:2). We have all missed the mark of God's perfection and deserve only His punishment, now and eternally. However, God so loved the world that He sent His only Son to endure the punishment for our sins. All who believe in Jesus have no need to fear the Day of Judgment.

Epistle (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). After describing the future glory of those who have died in Christ, Paul now proceeds to tell the Thessalonians about the coming Day of Judgment in which the Lord will give His final verdict. Let us walk in holiness and righteousness so that we may not be ashamed when our Lord appears to judge our work. The Lord who has chosen us for salvation and died for us will be on our side on the final Day of Judgment.

Gospel (Matthew 25:14-30). Our relationship to God and the world is one of stewardship. We are to use everything entrusted to us in such a way that it benefits God's kingdom. Though modern people often have far more material and technological means than any previous generation, they often use these tools selfishly. An unfailing promise attaches to faithful stewardship: if we use the things entrusted to us for God and His purposes, we will be blessed here and in heaven.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Zephaniah 1:7-16

⁷ Be silent before the Sovereign LORD, for the day of the LORD is near. The LORD has prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated those he has invited. ⁸ On the day of the LORD's sacrifice I will punish the princes and the king's sons and all those clad in foreign clothes. ⁹ On that day I will punish all who avoid stepping on the threshold, who fill the temple of their gods with violence and deceit. ¹⁰ "On that day," declares the LORD, "a cry will go up from the Fish Gate, wailing from the New Quarter, and a loud crash from the hills. ¹¹ Wail, you who live in the market district, all your merchants will be wiped out, all who trade with silver will be ruined. ¹² At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who are complacent, who are like wine left on its dregs, who think, 'The LORD will do nothing, either good or bad.' ¹³ Their wealth will be plundered, their houses demolished. They will build houses but not live in them; they will plant vineyards but not drink the wine.

1:7 Be silent before the Sovereign LORD. The word Zephaniah uses to command silence is the same as our word "hush!" It is a strong command, calling for immediate and absolute compliance. The reasons are given. The people of Judah are standing before the Sovereign Lord. He is lord and master of the whole earth; He is God, who has chosen and saved Israel. In His presence the only proper response is silence. (PBC)

1:8 princes and king's sons. Leaders of Judah are singled out as objects of God's wrath. (TLSB)

1:9 avoid stepping on the threshold. Possibly refers to the superstitious practice of Philistine priests, who did not dare to step on the threshold of Dagon's temple. (TLSB)

1:10 Merchants who had grown rich through corrupt business practices would be destroyed. (CSB)

1:10 loud crash up from the hills. These “hills” may also have been a newly developed area in the city. It too would have been easy pickings for the enemy. The wailing and crashing sounds Zephaniah mentions indicate the terrible human suffering involved in such a ruthless invasion and the destruction of the walls, houses, and buildings that would accompany such an invasion. (PBC)

1:12 search Jerusalem with lamps. The Babylonians later dragged people from houses, streets, sewers and tombs, where they had hidden. (CSB)

1:13 goods ... houses ... vineyards. Like practical atheists in any age, the people of Judah valued only wealth, real estate, and business. The Lord would destroy it all. (TLSB)

1:14 great day of the LORD is near. Some things Zephaniah prophesied took place at the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. Other details would be fulfilled later. The ultimate fulfillment will be on Judgment Day. (CSB)

EPISTLE – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

5:2 day of the Lord. In the OT, this refers to the Day of Judgment, in which the righteous will be vindicated and Yahweh will make an impartial judgment. In the NT, with the recognition of Jesus as Lord, the function of final judgment is attributed to Him. Therefore, here it refers to the day in which Christ will be revealed in glory to vindicate His people and judge the world in righteousness. (TLSB)

5:2 thief in the night. Suddenly and at an unexpected time. It is God’s will that men should live in constant preparation for it. All overcurious computations for the purpose of fixing its exact date are vain and profitless. (Concordia Bible)

5:3 while people. The wicked, who are living in careless security. (Concordia Bible)

5:3 labor pains. Just as a woman who is in labor pains can’t escape those pains by changing her mind and deciding she doesn’t want to be pregnant, so they will have no chance to turn back. (PBC)

5:4 darkness. Believers no longer live in darkness, nor are they of the darkness (v. 5). (CSB)

5:6 asleep. Not death, but a life in sin, which is a life in darkness. Those in Christ, the light of the world, are awake and sober. (TLSB)

5:7 *get drunk at night*. The alcohol dulls their senses and for a time they become totally unconcerned about those problems. (PBC)

GOSPEL – Matthew 25:14-30

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. **15** To one he gave five talents^a of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. **16** The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. **17** So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. **18** But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. **19** “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. **20** The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ **21** “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ **22** “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ **23** “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ **24** “Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. **25** So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ **26** “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? **27** Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. **28**’ “Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. **29** For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. **30** And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

25:15 talent. Gk monetary unit. A silver talent was worth c 7,300 denarii (a denarius equals one day’s wage), and a gold talent could be 30 times more valuable. Sizable amounts of money are in play here. (TLSB)

25:15 each according to his ability. Representing the various gifts which God bestows on different individuals. All our blessings we receive from God, and to Him we are justly accountable for the use of them. He does not give the same to all, and He requires only according to what a man hath. Of course, no one will be condemned for not having received more. (CB)

25:16 traded. Though the nature of their business is not specified, both men earned 100 percent profit. (TLSB)

25:16 hid his master’s money. Third servant tries to keep from losing his master’s money rather than putting it to productive use. Later, he will pay for this lack of effort. (TLSB)

25:24 Third servant characterizes his master as “hard” to blame his own failure on his master. The description has a variety of unflattering connotations: cruel, demanding, strong, or violent. (TLSB)

25:29 everyone who has. A disposition to rightly use the blessings which God gives is a preparation for more and greater blessings. (CB)