

Notes for Next Sunday

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). Life is full of choices; few carry eternal consequences. But this choice – do we follow our covenant God, or do we go away to follow other gods? – was as important as life itself. Trusting the Lord and living His way isn't just the only way to stay alive; it's the only way life can be rich, full, and productive – the way He created it to be. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because apart from Him there is no real happiness and peace. To reject God's mercy and to seek greater joy and satisfaction somewhere else is the surest way to personal and national ruin. (PBC)

Epistle (Philemon 1-21). Here, Paul writes to Philemon who was believer in Colosse and a slave owner. One of his slaves, Onesimus, had stolen from him and run away. Under Roman law this was punishable by death. Somehow Onesimus met Paul and became a Christian. Now he is willing to return to his master. This text is a letter to Philemon setting tone that will have Philemon be willing to take Onesimus back. Paul plays on his friendship with Philemon in urging him to take Onesimus back.

Gospel (Luke 14:25-35). Although Jesus may not be popular with the Pharisees and lawyers, He still draws large crowds. This crowd is journeying with him to Jerusalem. Luke's travel narrative takes another turn with Jesus teaching in parables that are unique to Luke's gospel. There seems to be a large block of teaching from 14:25 to 17:10, which means that the parables of Luke 15–16 that center in God's mercy and compassion may be part of one extended discourse, which begins with 14:25–35. (CC p. 579) Hate in verse 26 is not about being cruel to family members but means to love one thing over another or anything else in life. Jesus then gives several illustrations about proper preparation for being one of His disciples. A key characteristic of a prepared disciple is to listen to what Jesus has to say.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Deuteronomy 30:15-20

¹⁵ See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. ¹⁶ For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, ¹⁸ I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

30:19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses. God informed Israel that His whole creation was summoned to testify that He had told His people in advance what the results of their choice would be: it was a matter of life and death. (TLSB)

30:19 choose life. The most important question you and I will ever have to answer is, "What do you think of Jesus Christ?"

EPISTLE – Philemon 1-21

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear

friend and fellow worker,² to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home:³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴ I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers,⁵ because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.⁶ I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.⁷ Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.⁸ Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do,⁹ yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—¹⁰ I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.¹² I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you.¹³ I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel.¹⁴ But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced.¹⁵ Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good—¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.¹⁸ If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self.²⁰ I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

4 thank ... remember you in my prayers. It is an excellent way to begin one's prayers and greetings of others. Paul uses it a great deal.

5 because I hear about your faith. This phrase helps the person(s) know that it not just empty flattery that is being shared. It also gives credit to the Lord for his work.

8 I could be bold and order you. Paul does not use his power to get his way. He uses a gentle servant approach to urge Philemon to do the right thing.

10 my son. It seems that Onesimus was not a Christian when he ran away.

11 useless ... useful. After his baptism by Paul he truly lives up to his name both in a physical sense as a slave to Philemon and as a Christian helper to Paul.

18 charge it to me. This is what Jesus did for us; he took upon himself the debt of our sin and paid for it with his holy and precious blood.

GOSPEL – Luke 14:25-35

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. ³⁴ “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be

made salty again? ³⁵ It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

14:28 estimate the cost. Jesus did not want a blind, naive commitment that expected only blessings. As a builder estimates costs or a king evaluates military strength (v. 31), so a person must consider what Jesus expects of his followers. (CSB)

14:29 will ridicule him. As an unfinished builder may be ridiculed, so those who falter in their discipleship dishonor themselves and the Gospel. (TLSB)

14:30 finish. Complete the course and keep the faith. (TLSB)

14:33 give up everything he has. The cost, Jesus warned, is complete surrender to him. (CSB)

14:34 Salt is good. Ancient salt was made of several chemicals dried from seawater. Sodium chloride, true salt, could leach out, leaving other worthless minerals. So the Christian whose faith has eroded is no longer a Christian. (TLSB)

14:35 is thrown out. The partly desalinated compound could still harm the soil; therefore, it must be thrown away like a worthless servant into the outer darkness (Mt 25:30). (TLSB)

14:35 let him hear. The follower of Jesus needs to listen to everything He (Jesus) has to say, not only what one wants to hear. (PBC)