**Notes for Next Sunday**

Fifth Sunday in Lent

**The Point of this Week’s Readings**

The readings are about the Word of God and progress to the teaching of it, especially the new covenant which is fulfilled in Christ.

The Psalm (119:9-16) begins with the question “how can a young man keep his way pure?” (v. 9). The rest of verse 9 and all the other verses focus on the fact that only the Word of God can be the correct answer. Only by meditating and fixing their eyes on God’s Word (v. 15), can a youth or anyone else for that matter be able to live in God’s ways.

The Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:31-34) lays out the idea that Israel had not kept God’s Old Testament covenant. Now God is now making a new covenant. The old covenant had been the Law given in stone. This would be external information. The new covenant would have the Holy Spirit living in people and be written in people’s hearts. This would completely govern their spiritual world.

The Epistle (Hebrews 5:1-10) moves the concept of the teaching of God’s new covenant a step further. It begins with the calling of Aaron, the first high priest (v. 4). It transitions to Christ with Melchizedek being the bridge between Old Testament priests and Jesus. There is strong emphasis on the importance that God did the calling and the directing of both Aaron and Christ.

P.S. Melchizedek is sort of a mystery. It is said that he was king of Salem (Jerusalem) and aspriest of God. As a priest he received Abraham’s tithes. He is a type of Christ, the priest/king.

The Gospel (Mark 10:32-45) has Jesus teaching His disciples about His upcoming death. When at first they don’t get it, He uses their wrong-headed behavior to restate the very purpose for His coming to earth: “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life as a ransom for many” (v. 45).

The Jews saw the coming Messiah as someone who would be a liberator from all their enemies. That meant that He would come with great might. The vast majority of Jews then and now are still looking for that kind of Savior. The disciples only got it after Jesus’ resurrection.

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

**Psalm – 119:9-16**

**9﻿****How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. ﻿10﻿ I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. ﻿11﻿ I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. ﻿12﻿ Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. ﻿13﻿ With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. ﻿14﻿ I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. ﻿15﻿ I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. ﻿16﻿ I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word**.

The young man in verse 9 is perhaps in his teens or early twenties.

God’s word here includes not only the Law but also God’s promises to be fulfilled in Christ. It should be read, studied, meditated upon, and memorized, so that it is hidden in our hearts for the use whenever we need it. Then it can guard and keep one’s spiritual life.

The action described in verse 13 could be like our worship service in that our liturgy helps us repeat God’s promises and their fulfillment.

**Old Testament – Jeremiah 31:31-34**

**31﻿ “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ﻿32﻿ It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband tothem,” declares the LORD. ﻿33﻿ “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ﻿34﻿ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”**

These verses constitute one of the most important prophetic passages in all of Scripture, as testified by its quotation in its entirety in the NT, Heb. 8:8-12. In fact, this passage is the primary reason we refer to the Scripture’s two sections as the OT and NT.

The phrase “declares the Lord” occurs four times in these four verses. Jeremiah is speaking with authority straight from God. Notice throughout that God takes the initiative: “I will make,” “I will put,” “I will be,” “I will forgive,” etc.

The old covenant was solemnized by the blood of sacrificial animals, so the new would be solemnized by the blood of Christ (v. 31).

By initiating a new covenant God was is no way introducing a new way of salvation. The old covenant was based on the Law it did not empower people to be saved because they could not keep the Law.

The “new” covenant does not abolish the “old” but supersedes it in the sense that through the new covenant the old is fulfilled and its purpose achieved.

When the word “husband” is mentioned it symbolizes the marriage concept God had with His people. God was faithful but Israel was worshiping Baal the Canaanite god of fertility. They were like an unfaithful spouse. In the New Testament Christ is the bridegroom and the church is His bride.

In verse 34 the phrase “no longer will a man teach his neighbor…brother.” What this means is when the Lord has done his new work, there will no longer be among his people who are ignorant of God and His will for human lives. True knowledge of the Lord will be shared by all—young and old, the peasant and the powerful.

**Epistle Lesson – Hebrews 5:1-10**

**Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ﻿2﻿ He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. ﻿3﻿ This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. ﻿4﻿ No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. ﻿5﻿ So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” ﻿6﻿ And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” ﻿7﻿ During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ﻿8﻿ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ﻿9﻿ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ﻿10﻿ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.**

This lesson repeats the refrain from the Old Testament lesson that priests are chosen by God. These priests are to take care of the people and offer sacrifices on the people’s behalf. But these Old Testament priests also need to offer sacrifices for their own sin.

Christ, on the other hand, is the sinless Son of God. He does not need to offer sacrifices on His behalf. His sacrifice is also different in that it does not need to be repeated.

In verse 6 Melchizedek is mentioned. Melchizedek is one of those mysteries of Holy Scriptures, appearing only three times. In Genesis 14:18-20 he appears briefly as he meets and blesses Abraham returning form rescuing Lot. There he is called both “King of Salem” and priest of God Most High.” In Psalm 110:4 David refers to him even more briefly and by inspiration sees in him a type of Christ, who would be both King and Priest. Here in Hebrews the reference is in much greater detail.

Like Melchizedek, Jesus is a true priest, even though He was not from Aaron’s lineage (cf. v 10). (TLSB)

Following the example of Ps 110:4, the writer of Hebrews provides an extensive comparison between this ancient priest of Salem (Jerusalem) and Jesus. The Dead Sea Scrolls and other early Jewish literature show a similar interest in the priesthood of Melchizedek, who was viewed as the first to establish priestly services at or near the site where the temple was built (Jos, *War* 6:438). Using Melchizedek as an illustration is one reason why the audience for Hebrews is considered to be a Jewish-Christian congregation. (TLSB)

**Gospel – Mark 10:32-45**

**32﻿ They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. ﻿33﻿ “We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, ﻿34﻿ who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”**

The disciples miss the point of what Jesus is plainly telling them, on many levels. They really did not hear what Jesus’ ministry was all about. They like all of Israel were looking for Jesus to be a great conqueror who would get rid of the Romans. This leads to unnecessary fear and confusion on their part.

This seems to be the case still, as Christians often seem surprised when suffering comes, as the disciples did, even though the Bible tells us what to expect from our life in this world.

**35﻿ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” ﻿36﻿ “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. ﻿37﻿ They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” ﻿38﻿ “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” ﻿39﻿ “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ﻿40﻿ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.” ﻿41﻿ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ﻿42﻿ Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ﻿43﻿ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ﻿44﻿ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ﻿45﻿ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

In verses 35 and 36 the word “want” appears several times. That is the root of the problem for James and John. They are consumed with their own desires. Jesus had taught them in the simple prayer, “Thy will be done.”

It was surprising that James and John brought this request to Jesus. As part of the inner circle they should have known better. But the human heart is by nature sinful.

To share someone’s cup (v. 38) was a recognized expression for sharing his fate. In the OT the cup of wine is a common metaphor for the wrath of God’s judgment upon human sin and rebellion, and this understanding was kept alive into the first century.

The other ten (v. 41) are no better as they become indignant of James and John. They may have had visions of grandeur themselves.

Now it is once again time for Jesus to do some teaching (v. 42). Jesus instructs them that there are two big differences between the kingdom of the world and His kingdom. Power is good when it comes for civil authorities to protect and serve the citizenry. HOWEVER, Christians are not placed on earth to order people around but to serve others as Jesus states for himself in verse 45.