

Notes for Next Sunday

Second Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Hosea 5:15 – 6:6). Israel had been unfaithful chasing after false gods. God is calling her to repentance. God, however, is lovingly encouraging Israel come back to him instead of threatening them with fire and brimstone. Not only is God inviting them back but he is also promising to bind up the wounds they incurred at the hands of these false gods.

Epistle (Romans 4:13-25). Abraham trusted that God was able to do what He promised. Trials and challenges may tempt us to doubt God's promises. As He did with Abraham, God will strengthen our faith, assure us of His promises, help us to trust, and fulfill all He said He would do.

Gospel (Matthew 9:9-13). That Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners may not shock Bible readers today. We think of Him as the friend of sinners. But it was shocking to many first-century Jews that Jesus would practice table fellowship with such people (cf 11:19). Jesus is unlike any other Jewish rabbi. This festive banquet is His opportunity to call to faith people who are conscious of their unrighteousness. Jesus sits with them, not because they are worthy, but because He is merciful. He wants sinners included in His kingdom.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Hosea 5:15-5:6

¹⁵ Then I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me."

5:15 *go back to my place.* God threatened to withdraw from Israel until, out of desperation, she truly repented. This idea sets the stage for the prophet's next theme. (CSB)

Pictures a lion retiring to its den after the hunt. Due to the people's ongoing apostasy, God's place is now far from Israel. (TLSB)

"Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. ² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. ³ Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth." ⁴ "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. ⁵ Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you. ⁶ For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

6:1 *let us return.* Hosea invites Ephraim and Judah to do right. (TLSB)

6:3 *acknowledge the LORD.* Hosea urges the people to strive for knowledge that begins with “the fear of the LORD.” Israel demonstrates a distinct lack of this knowledge by chasing after Baal. (TLSB)

like the winter rains ... spring rains. Israel believed that, as surely as seasonal rains fell, reviving the earth, God’s favor would return and restore her. (CSB)

6:4–8:14 The Lord speaks. (TLSB)

6:6 *not sacrifice.* Sacrifice apart from faithfulness to the Lord’s will is wholly unacceptable to God had commanded sacrifices, yet they were pleasing to Him only if they came from the heart. Jesus quotes this passage in order to condemn the Pharisees’ insincerity. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Romans 4:13-25

¹³ It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴ For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵ because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷ As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. ¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²² This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” ²³ The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, ²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

In Jewish circles, “what is striking is the way in which when the concept ‘promise’ emerges it is subordinated to or its effects seen as mediated through the law.” A couple of examples, which also include the notion of inheritance, illustrate the point. Psalms of Solomon 12 contrasts the deeds of the wicked with the devout who refrain from doing evil. It concludes with this plea: “and let the pious of the Lord inherit the promises of the Lord” Ps Sol 12:6). Prior to the purification of the temple by the Maccabees, 2 Macc 2:17–18 states: “it is God who has saved all his people, and has returned the

inheritance to all, and the kingship and the priesthood and the consecration, as he promised through the law. (CC)

GOSPEL – Matthew 9:9-13

⁹ As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" ¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

9:9 *Matthew*. Also called Levi. One of the 12 apostles. (TLSB)

tax booth. Possibly on the border between the territories of Philip and Herod Antipas, where commercial tolls were levied. Matthew's administrative occupation likely helped prepare him for writing his Gospel. (TLSB)

9:10 *tax collectors*. It is important to begin any discussion of the character and activities of "tax gatherers" with a caveat about the extent of our knowledge. (T. E. Schmidt, "Taxes," *DJG*, 804, reminds us: "Jews in the time of Jesus were subject to a complex system of religious and secular taxation, the extent and burden of which is difficult to determine." Much of what scholars specifically conclude about taxation and tax gatherers is limited to "reasonable" conclusions drawn from limited evidence. A good illustration of our dependence on inferences is provided by two different scholarly conclusions about the significance of John's exhortation to tax gatherers not to collect more than is appointed for them (Lk 3:12–13). S. R. Llewelyn, "Tax Collection," *NewDocs* 8:74, concludes that these tax gatherers were the actual bidders on tax-farming contracts, but that the *system* imposed limits on how much they could collect. By contrast, J. R. Donahue, "Tax Collector," *ABD* 6:337, concludes that Lk 3:12–13 implies that these men were mere employees who were limited by their overseers. Both deductions are reasonable; there is no way of telling which is correct.) Specialists in this area work with the assumption that taxation in Roman-controlled Egypt (about which we have more firsthand knowledge through the discovery of various papyri) offers close parallels with taxation in Roman-controlled Palestine. However, even within Palestine, an important distinction existed during the ministry of Jesus. Taxation and tax farming in Judea and Samaria would have been carried out under more direct Roman supervision, since the Roman procurator (who was Pontius Pilate from AD 26/27 to 36/37) had direct power over these regions. In Galilee, by contrast, Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruled from 4 BC to AD 39, and any "tax gatherers" would have been operating under his aegis and authority. The Herods were Idumean, not Roman, and tended to be more favorable to the Jewish people than the Roman rulers were. Although we cannot be sure of common perceptions among the Jewish populace in Galilee, there is at least the possibility that animosity toward tax gatherers as collaborators and quislings may have been more muted in Galilee. An entire generation of the populace will have known no other ruler than Herod Antipas, and we cannot be

sure that the Romans were uppermost in the minds of Galilean Jews, even though Antipas served only at the good will of Rome. (Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 266, notes the possible need to nuance our understandings at this point. He acknowledges: “This may not make too much of a difference, since Herod was scarcely a popular monarch: kept in power by Rome as a client king, his Jewish orthodoxy was widely suspect.” Many scholars do not even consider the possibility of such a difference in context between Judea and Galilee (e.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 293; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:238). The magisterial study of Herod Antipas is by Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). (CC)

sinners – Disreputable people. (TLSB)

ate with him – To eat with someone was a powerful message of acceptance, trust and the partnership of fellowship which also included a sense of intimacy and familiarity. Jesus took a huge risk here because it indicated that he was someone who hung around with a rough and wicked crowd. In the Lord’s Supper we experience the acceptance Christ has for us. The faith he gave us brings about this acceptance. The Lord’s Supper is also a reminder of the feast that is to come when we join him in heaven

9:13 Jesus told the Pharisees, who were proud of their knowledge of Scripture, to go back to school. They failed to see that mercy was the point of God’s work. (TLSB)

I desire mercy, not sacrifice – Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 to stress that even in the old covenant empty formalism does not please God. Recognizing one’s sins and having faith in the mercy of Christ is active in showing mercy toward others. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)