

Notes for Next Sunday

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 45:1-7). Infinitely merciful and patient, God does not tire to repeat Himself. Again and again He promises to deliver His fallen creatures and goes to great lengths to persuade doubting and fainthearted souls to believe the proclamation of their liberation. (TLSB)

Epistle (1 Thessalonians 1:1-10). The good news of our Lord Jesus Christ always has power to change lives (Heb 4:12). The Word's power may be demonstrated in visible, supernatural miracles in areas that have not been reached with the Gospel. (TLSB)

Gospel (Matthew 22:15-22). Jesus arrives in Jerusalem to fulfill his mission, right on God's time, as the spotless Lamb of God. Matthew relays a succession of three interrogations of Jesus by the Pharisees and Sadducees (15–22, 23–33, 34–40) trying to find some fault in him. None was found. Through these three examinations, Matthew shows that Jesus is the spotless Lamb, now examined and ready (Ex 12:3–6) for the sacrifice on behalf of all. Jesus ends the examination by asking his questioners in vv 41–46 to interpret the question of Psalm 110 regarding the Messiah as David's son (true man) and David's Lord (true God). They could not or would not answer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 4)

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 45:1-7

“This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: ²I will go before you and will level the mountains, I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. ³I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. ⁴For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. ⁵I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, ⁶so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. ⁷I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

45:1 *anointed*. “Messiah” comes from the Hebrew for this word. Cyrus, a foreign emperor, is called “his anointed” just as he is called “my shepherd” (44:28), because God has appointed him to carry out a divine commission in his role as king.

45:2–3 In 539 BC, when Cyrus surrounded the city of Babylon, the priests of Marduk submitted and declared him to be Marduk's chosen monarch. They then opened the city gates to allow him and his army to enter peacefully. Jesus is the ultimate Anointed One, who opens the gates of hell (Rv 1:18) and sets prisoners free (Jn 8:36). (TLSB)

When Cyrus took Babylon he was ignorant of Jehovah and of the designs which he purposed to accomplish through him, and was only indulging his own ambitious desires. The knowledge which he afterwards had of God, (Ezra 1:2) was doubtless received from the Jews residing in Babylon. God has often employed princes. Who were ignorant of Him and His counsels, to accomplish wonderful deliverances for His people. (CB)

EPISTLE – 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.

1:1 *Silas*. Aka Silas; leading member of the Church in Jerusalem; proclaimer of God’s Word. After the Jerusalem Council, he accompanied Paul to Antioch to deliver the Council’s decision (Ac 15, esp v 22). During their travels together, they met Timothy in Lystra. (TLSB)

Timothy. See Introduction to 1 Timothy: Recipient. Both he and Silas helped Paul found the Thessalonian church (see Ac 17:1–14). (CSB)

Son of a Greek man and a Jewish woman (cf Ac 16:1). His mother had become a Christian a few years earlier when Paul and Barnabas preached in the city. (TLSB)

Both were trusted junior co-workers who accompanied St Paul in the proclamation of the Gospel. Though separated for a while, they were now reunited with Paul in Corinth. They had visited with him in Thessalonica in AD 49 (cf Ac 17:1–14). Both were selected by Paul for his second missionary journey (Ac 15:36–40; 16:1–5). (TLSB)

Thessalonians. In the first century, Thessalonica was the capital city of the province of Macedonia and the largest city on the Greek Peninsula. Today it is called Thessaloniki (or Salonika) and is still located on the Thermaic Gulf in Greece. (TLSB)

Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians’ Faith

²We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. ³We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. ⁶You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. ⁷And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. ⁸The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, ⁹for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

1:2 *thank*. For the fruit of faith God produced in the lives of the Thessalonians. (TLSB)

The present tense denotes a continual remembrance of his fellow believers in prayers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

1:3 The triad of faith, hope and love is found often in the NT (5:8; Ro 5:2–5; 1Co 13:13; Gal 5:5–6; Col 1:4–5; Heb 6:10–12; 10:22–24; 1Pe 1:3–8, 21–22). (CSB)

Gifts of the Holy Spirit that remain with God’s people when all others vanish. The greatest of all is love (1Co 13). Though listed separately, the three are connected. (TLSB)

1:5 *our gospel*. Paul did not travel to Thessalonica because of favorable “scouting reports” or because an ancient market analyst suggested it as a great place to start a congregation. Rather Paul received a revelation from the Lord that God’s people in Macedonia needed to hear the Good News. Paul’s ministry, then, was prompted and sustained by grace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

1:6 The Thessalonians followed Christ’s and the apostles’ examples by suffering persecution gladly for the sake of their faith in the Gospel (1Co 11:1). (TLSB)

1:9–10† Three marks of true conversion: (1) turning from idols, (2) serving God and (3) waiting for Christ to return. In his two short letters to the Thessalonians, Paul speaks much of the second coming of Christ (v. 10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–5:4; 5:23–24; 2Th 1:7–10; 2:1–12). (CSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 22:15-22

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” ¹⁸ But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “**You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax.**” They brought him a denarius, ²⁰ and he asked them, “**Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?**” ²¹ “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “**Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.**” ²² When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

There is an old saying that politics makes strange bedfellows. Here the Pharisees and the Herodians display a common hatred for Jesus that overshadows their sharp disagreements with each other. (PBC)

22:17 *Pay taxes to Caesar or not*. This tax was levied directly by Roman authority in Judea and had perhaps been a contributing cause to social unrest and violence a generation before. (CC)

22:19-20 Coin minted by Rome for paying this tax bore the image of Tiberius Caesar and identified him as “son of the divine Augustus.” Ironically, the question was put to Jesus, the true Son of God. The fact that they possessed this coin tacitly acknowledged Caesar’s rule. (TLSB)

22:22 THEY LEFT HIM – They left him alone and in a sense they had set a trap for Jesus, but had fallen into it themselves.

On Tuesday He tells the Pharisees to pay taxes to Caesar, and on Friday they haul Him before Pilate and say, “We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king” (Luke 23:2). (PBC)