

Lay Preachers' Bulletin – August 2020

August's lectionary notes have been provided by The Rev. Dr. Kyle Norman, Incumbent of Holy Cross, Calgary & Regional Dean of Palliser.

August 2, 2020 - Pentecost 9

Romans 9:1-5 – God's Sovereign Choice

- In Romans 9 -11, Paul is addressing the issue of Israel as God's people. Due to the inclusion of the Gentiles, does this mean that God has rejected Israel as his chosen people? Paul's ultimate answer (Romans 11) is that gentiles are grafted *into* the promise of promise of salvation – a promise already enjoyed by Israel.
- “For I wish I were myself cursed and cut off from Christ” (vs 3). Similar to Exodus 32 where Moses asks that God blot out his name from the book of life if God would not forgive Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf. Here Paul is expressing a compassionate concern for the future of God's people. Paul is saying he would be willing to suffer further cursing (*anathema* “being cut off”) if it would help Israel recognise Christ as Messiah. Whose salvation do you feel passionately concerned about? As people of faith, do we feel concerned whether people know Jesus as Lord?
- “Theirs is the adoption of as sons” – what follows is a brief walk through of Israel's election as God's people. This history is a history of God's dealing with his people, culminating in the full realization of redemption through Christ. What is your “history”? Where and when has God worked in your with, to bring about the full realization of redemption in Christ Jesus? What is the history of the parish? This passage can provide an opportunity to re-tell the important stories of the parish.

- An important element in this passage is God's love for, and working through, the nation of Israel. There is no anti-Semitism or rejection of the Jewish people in this text. To preach on this passage must involve God's faithfulness to his promise that "I will be your God, and you will be my people."

August 9, 2020 - Pentecost 10

Matthew 14:22-33 – Jesus walks on water.

- Notice word repetition: Frequent use of "Immediately." A three-part sermon may include: The immediate call to set out / The immediate call to courage / The immediate hand of Jesus.
- Throughout the passage, Jesus moves nearer and nearer to the disciples. Jesus begins on land, Jesus walk toward them, Jesus immediately reaches out his hand (showing that he is right beside Peter).
- How does Jesus make his way to us?
- "Buffeted by the waves" - This was no minor storm. The waves were overtaking the boat. Jesus calls Peter out in the midst of the storm – not calm waters.
- Notice that Peter only begins to sink once he takes his eyes off the saviour and begins to pay more attention to the storm. Where does Jesus call us out in faith. Of course, if we will live out this passage, we must recognise that stepping out of the boat is no easy task – it takes risk.

August 16, 2020 - Pentecost 11

Matthew 15:(10-20), 21-28 – The Faith of the Canaanite Woman

- This is an extremely difficult passage. To preach on this passage, one must be willing to avoid “safe answers” such as “Jesus was having a bad day . . .or Jesus was joking. . .or “I imagine Jesus gave her a little wink.”
- Ask yourself, “where is the shock of this passage?” The shock is NOT in Jesus’ silence and initial response. Jesus’ initial silence to the foreign woman was in keeping with Jewish custom. Also, given that she came herself, this would indicate that she was a poor widow with no one to send in her place. The shock of this interaction (for the community around) was his declaration that “Woman, you have great faith!”
- Jesus uses a diminutive form of “dog” – however, we must recognise that there is NO positive reference to dogs in scripture. Dogs were seen as unclean scavengers. Make no mistake – this would have been understood as an insult.
- The woman portrays extreme faith. A faith that was willing to risk silence, and mockery. She speaks to a Jewish man when that was against custom. She Calls out using Messianic titles – acknowledging a profound belief that the presence of Jesus meant healing and life. She persists in her conversation with Jesus – trusting deeply that the Lord’s power is intended to make its way to all people (i.e. even the dogs under the table).
- Where are you willing to take the risk of faith?

- Who are we? Are we the woman who comes with a need? Or are we the disciples who attempt to keep out those whom we believe 'don't belong'?

August 23, 2020 - Pentecost 12

Matthew 16:13-20 – Peter's confession

- “Who do people say son of Man is?” This passage provides a great opportunity to explore various popular views of Jesus. Is Jesus just a teacher? A character in a story? Is Jesus my buddy? What distinguishes the Christian understanding of Jesus as Lord?
- “Who do you say I am?” – notice that Jesus connects the idea of “son of man” – a messianic title – and himself. Jesus self identifies as the Messiah in this passage.
- Who do *You* say I am – Jesus is asking for a personal response. At some point, our faith must push past what others say – and be about a person that we have met.
- “John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or other prophets” – John the Baptist had recently been executed. Jewish thought was that the messiah would be preceded by a return of the prophets.
- These options are not easier to believe!! From a faith standpoint- it takes as much “faith” to believe that Jesus is the reincarnation of the beheaded John the Baptist, as it does to believe that Jesus is the Incarnation of God on earth.
- Why do people find it easier to believe in the most outlandish things but refuse to believe there is a God who loves them and comes to them?

- “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name. It is the Greek word meaning ‘anointed one’ – or Messiah.
- Gates of Hell will not stand against the church – notice this means that the church is on the move? It is not that hell cannot overtake the gates of the church – the church is a force that moves throughout the world in the power of God’s kingdom.

August 30, 2020 - Pentecost 13

Romans 12:9-21 – The call to love.

- “Love must be sincere.” – the word translated sincere could better be rendered ‘un-hypocritical’; The word for love is *agape* – the self-sacrificial form of love as expressed most profoundly in Jesus.
- “be devoted to one another – honor one another”. Notice that *agape* love is always focused outward – we serve others as we serve the Lord. This passage is concerned, not with how we receive love, but how others receive love through us.
- Given the times we are living in – a sermon on verse 12 could be quite powerful.
- What does it mean for your church to be:
 - Joyful in hope
 - Patient in affliction
 - Faithful in prayer?
- “Heaping burning coals on their heads.” It is based on an Egyptian Idiom of which we do not have an exact understanding. The best (and most widely accepted interpretation) is that ‘heaping burning coals’ is to bring about repentance and changed-life.

- The passage ends as it began: Love overcomes Evil. How are we, and our parishes living out, in tangible ways, the Love of God?