

Lay Preachers' Bulletin – September 2025

September's lectionary notes have been provided by The Rev. Dean Hartung, Incumbent - St. Aldhelm, Vulcan.

September 7 - Pentecost 13

Propers - BAS page 378

Jeremiah - Background and overview of the book.

Jeremiah is the author of this book. His name means the one whom God appoints or exalts. Time period of Jeremiah's time of prophesy is approximately between 627 and 586 BC. Jeremiah prophesied the persecution and destruction of the temple and he also foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. Jeremiah also exhorted the people of Israel to repent and he promised hope for those who remained faithful to the Lord.

He prophesied that there would be a new covenant in the future (Chapter 38. 31-34) to be inscribed on every believer's heart. This would be fulfilled in the Messiah- Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah was called the weeping prophet as he shed many tears during the time of the Babylonian captivity which was 640-609 BC.

He preached a knowledge of God and the forgiveness of sin. He was heavily burdened by this message and the state of the people of Israel.

OLD TESTAMENT: [Jeremiah 18:1-11](#)

This section of scripture uses the metaphor of a potter and clay to illustrate God's relationship with Israel. It emphasizes both God's sovereignty and the opportunity for the people of Israel to change and be obedient through repentance. This passage highlights that God, as the divine potter has the power to shape nations, but also comparing Israel to clay that it can respond

to God's molding or they can resist it, thus impacting their future in either a redemptive way, or a way that the nation will suffer. God can shape the nation according to His will, even when the nation is destined for destruction. Jonah and the judgement on Ninevah is a good example of such a circumstance where destruction seemed inevitable, was actually delayed.

Humans in many ways have agency here. They can choose to respond to God's (the potters reshaping) or not. Verse 12 clearly states this. Man as the clay and choose to go their own way and do whatever they please. This of course has consequences. As an old boss of mine once said, everyone has choices to make. Blessing or judgement is the result.

Repentance is the key here to averting disaster. Repentance equals blessings, continuing into sin equals judgement.

God's plans here are not fixed and can be altered by Judah's response to God, via the message of the prophet. Once again, Ninevah's judgement was delayed due to a mass repentance of the city. This section Jeremiah emphasizes that God is a God of power and a God of mercy.

[Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17](#)

Time period at or around 1010 BC - 930 BC

This Psalm is attributed to King David as the author as per Jewish tradition and is a prayer that talks about and explores God's intimate knowledge of humanity including the author who wrote it.

The psalmist states that God knows his thoughts and his words even before they are formed and spoke and when that God searches and knows him completely. Nothing is a surprise to God.

This Psalm speaks to **God's Omniscience** - His all-knowing and **His Omnipresence** - his being everywhere at the same time. God is all encompassing in our lives and one cannot go anywhere that God is not. God

knows where we sit, stand, sleep and even hide. He is intimately acquainted with our thoughts and all ways.

God has known us and has knitted us together from our conception. He is the master creator and we are made fearfully and wonderfully as he formed us in the darkness of the womb. The womb is dark however God sees us clearly. He takes amazing power and care in our creation.

The Psalmist also recognizes that God determines the length of our lives; and that this has been done prior to our birth. I find this interesting as one of our grandchildren was still born at full term 13 years ago.

This Psalm encourages believers to trust in God and his unending knowledge and to embrace and trust His presence on all circumstances.

EPISTLE: [Philemon 1-21](#)

Overview and background of this short letter.

It is believed that St. Paul wrote this letter himself between 61-63 AD. And most likely written at the same time as Colossians in Rome and during Paul's captivity. Philemon was a member of the church Colosse. Some sources say that he was later consecrated a Bishop who was later martyred.

Onesimus means Greek for useful and he had become just the opposite as he had helped himself to his masters treasury and ran away. This was an offense that was punishable by death.

Onesimus somehow made contact with Paul and brought him to Christ. So, Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon as he still according to Roman law belonged to Philemon. Paul urges Philemon to take him back and forgive Onesimus of his theft with a forgiveness as a brother in the Lord. St. Paul also hints that he would not be at all displeased if Philemon released Onesimus from his bondage in order for him to work for Paul.

According to the Orthodox Church, this same Onesimus may be the same person that was mentioned by Ignatius who was Bishop of Ephesus around 40 years after the incident.

Major theme and application: we are all brothers and sisters in Christ despite whether we are actually slaves or we are free men and women. Forgiveness restores relationships and should be extended to all in God's family whether slave or free. There is transformative power in the Gospel, urging believers to extend grace and reconciliation to one another even in trying and difficult circumstances.

GOSPEL: [Luke 14:25-33](#)

The author of this Gospel is Luke. It is written around 70-80 AD. Luke does have knowledge of other written sources such as Mark. Luke was a gentile from Antioch who was a physician and a fellow worker with Paul.

It is written to Theophilus and is the only one of the four Gospels written to an individual.

Major Themes of this Gospel Reading:

- **There is a high cost to discipleship.** Jesus uses the word hate here when it comes to family members in comparison to loving Him. The hate is not literal but an idiom or a figurative expression that we need to prioritize Jesus above all earthly relationships and attachments.
- Discipleship is not a casual commitment but a radical one that causes ones priorities to completely be re-ordered.
- One must understand the commitment carefully before undertaking it: For ex.
- A builder counts the cost before he builds something to ensure he can finish it.
- A king must assess his strength before going to war to avoid defeat and shame.
- One must understand the demands of discipleship and be prepared to preserve though the difficulties. "whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple". Do not be like salt that has lost

its saltiness and is of no use. A casual commitment or a one- time commitment won't do. It must be an on- going way of life.

Renouncing Possessions

- “for whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple”.

September 14 - Holy Cross Day

Propers - BAS page 422

OLD TESTAMENT: [Numbers 21:4-9](#)

Background

Tells the story of the journey of the Israelite nation through the desert. They were ungrateful grumble and murmured against Moses and God due to the lack of provisions and the hardship that they endured after the Exodus.

- The Israelites long for the food and water that they had in Egypt. There was a total lack of gratitude for what God has done for them.
- God responds by sending fiery serpents that bite and kill many of them
- God instructs Moses to make a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole. Anyone who has been bitten and looks at it will be healed

The symbolism here is that the bronze serpent is often interpreted as a foreshadowing of the healing and saving power of Jesus. The motionless serpent on the pole signaled that the power of the venom in them was now dead. This is an Orthodox interpretation but it seems fitting. As the Israelites looked towards the serpent for healing, believers in Jesus look to Him for salvation from sin and eternal life. The motionless Jesus lay on the cross, signaled the end of death's reign. His physical death, ended the power of sin and death. See 1 Corinthians 15:55. Where oh death is your sting.

Major Themes:

- Faith and obedience
- God's continuing mercy and provision
- Sin has consequences; sometimes life altering or life ending consequences.
- The murmuring and grumbling reflects the condition of our fallen human nature- to sin and complain. And it affects our outlook on how we view others and God. Is he a loving a merciful God or is he a cruel task master that puts us through trials for no reason. It's a good question to ask ourselves in our day to day lives.

- There is a need for repentance and intercession. Moses in the OT reading. Jesus today.

Psalm 98:1-6

Background

This is a call for joyful praise to God for his deeds, especially His salvation and His righteousness which he has revealed to all nations. The usage of musical instruments like harps, trumpets etc. are used to express praise.

- God salvation is intended for the whole world, just not the nation of Israel. That may be a surprise considering the exclusivity of Judaism. It was the only monotheistic religion of the day back around 1000 BC.
- The concept of salvation- “Yeshua” is linked to rescue, as in the bronze pole with the serpent on it, victory and even the name of Jesus. This Psalm highlights God’s righteousness revealed to all nations and looks at a future where God judges with fairness and equity.

EPISTLE: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Background to 1 Corinthians - written by St. Paul around 55 AD on his third missionary journey.

This section of the epistle speaks to the foolishness of the cross to those who are perishing- those who have rejected Jesus. The Jewish nation corporate that refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah. There were a few exceptions. And the Greeks were polytheistic and did not believe in one God. However, to those who are spiritually perishing and destined for eternal separation its garbage. It doesn’t make any sense. They thought belief in only one God was foolish.

God has made the wisdom of the world foolish. The world through its own wisdom did not know God. This same rule can be applied today in a society that is exceptionally tech savvy and where science has become so advanced, that it has replaced God in many areas. For example, miraculous

healings are no longer thought of as from God, but unknown mysteries or some doctors will say its luck, fate etc.

For those who believe, the cross is the power of God; the means by which they are saved. This highlights the transformative nature of faith and the way God chooses to reveal Himself. Even though the world thinks that this is foolish. God chooses the foolish things of this world to shame the wise- salvation comes through faith, not through human achievement or standing.

The Corinthian church was located in a very modern city for its day. Its population was between 600,000 to 700,000 people and it was a major center of commerce and trade. It valued intellectuality and worldly wisdom and philosophical exchanges. So, Paul's message would have seemed way too simple and easy. A belief in one God and a simple faith would have been difficult to understand. The phrase "it's so easy you can't grasp the concept" would apply here.

Jews request a sign, Greeks seek after wisdom, but St. Paul et al are preaching Christ crucified, which is a stumbling block.

GOSPEL: [John 3:13-17](#)

There is a comparative between Moses and Jesus. As the serpent was lifted up in the desert so the Son of Man must be lifted up. In both counts whether in the desert or looking at Jesus, both brought life from certain death. In the desert, it was our physical life that was saved from the bites of the serpents that God sent. When we look to Jesus as the author and perfecter of our faith, we look to a Savior that gives us eternal life.

God does not want anyone to perish. He sent the Son into the world to save it. However, people make choices and the result is either eternal life or eternal separation. It could not be clearer than that.

We look at and accept Jesus for who He is- the Holy one of God, part of a triune Godhead that is too mysterious to explain, or we look away and ignore it and so be classified as foolish.

September 21 - Pentecost 15

Propers - BAS page 381

OLD TESTAMENT: [Jeremiah 8:18 - 9:1](#)

This short section of Jeremiah describes the prophets deep sorrow on the impending destruction of Judah due to persistent and unrelenting sin and idolatry. Jeremiah looks at the people of Judah as those who had the chance to change, but chose not to. He is heartbroken by the peoples rejection of God's warning and the coming siege and devastation of the Babylonian invasion. 597 BC

The city will be under siege with no crops to be harvested, and no crops can be grown. Verse 18.

Jeremiah says that he weeps day and night for these people of mine. He knows that judgement is upon them due to their disobedience to God.

[Psalm 79:1-9](#)

This part of the Psalm talks about the utter death and destruction that comes to Jerusalem by the hand of the invaders. This parallels the reading from Jeremiah but it tells of much deep and wider destruction and paints a very real picture of the suffering and devastation.

The holy temple is defiled, Jerusalem is in ruins and there is so much death, that the birds of the air are eating the corpses. The blood being poured out by all the death is like water running down the street.

The Psalmist who is most likely Asaph cries out to God questioning His anger and asking for deliverance and forgiveness and intervention and relief. The Psalmist also asks God to turn His wrath on the nations that do not know him. Verse 6.

The Psalmist also ask God too no longer remember the sins of the past of their ancestors and asks for relief and compassion on the people and to forgive their sins for God's own name sake.

EPISTLE: [1 Timothy 2:1-7](#)

Background

This epistle was written around 51 AD most likely from Corinth. Many early church fathers such as Polycarp, St. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and St. Ignatius speak of St. Paul as the author. This is personal and pastoral letter. Timothy is the Bishop of Ephesus.

The epistle in this reading speaks of putting forth intercessory prayer for all without partiality, but special prayers for those in authority. Our Prayers of the People very much follow this model set out almost two thousand years ago.

We are to live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and reverence.

The religion of the Greeks is pluralist and elite. However, Paul states here that there is One God, and one mediator between God and man. God desires all humanity to be saved. He created us all equally and he created us to share in His goodness, and for this end he became a man like us.

GOSPEL: [Luke 16:1-13](#)

The Unjust Steward or the Shrewd Manager

The steward was accused of wasting a rich man's resources. He was facing unemployment from this accusation, so he used his influence to reduce debts owed to his master, hoping that this would pay him back later on when he needed the favour. This is the typical I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine scenario. By reducing his masters debt, he assures or at least makes connections in the business community that will pay off later.

Note: Jesus doesn't commend the man's dishonesty, however, Jesus commends his foresight into the matter. This suggests that believers should be as wise and proactive in seeking their spiritual future as the man was in seeking his in a worldly future.

The main points of this parable are:

1. The unrighteous are better at using money to make friends in the world than believers are using money to make friends in the kingdom of God. In other words, spending it on the needy.
2. All wealth is ultimately entrusted to us by God, and we are stewards of it and we are called to use it wisely. Not just for our own benefit but for the benefit of others. We can prioritize worldly wealth which is fleeting, and it can distract us from our spiritual priorities.
3. True security lies in trusting God's provisions.
4. The famous saying that we can only serve one master comes up. Money can cloud our ability to think straight and do the right thing. Think of Mary and Martha. Mary chose the better part. Listening to Jesus and being attentive at His feet had eternal benefits.
5. Having money isn't the issue, it's how important that it becomes in our life. Do we live for making millions at the expense of others, are we so selfish and self-focused that we do not see that others are in need. Think of the rich man who had a bumper crop and had to build new barns to store all the extra grain. It wasn't the building of the bigger barns that was the problem. It was the attitude that he could eat, drink and be merry. The mantra of someone who thought that he was self-made and thought that he had arrived. He failed to realize that his assets and his wealth came from God. Therefore, his life was demanded from him by God. Money does not guarantee happiness or a long life. We show our love for God by how we treat others, not just in mind but by helping those who are in need.

Summary

The parable of the shrewd manager or the unjust steward serves as a call to action, urging believers to be wise and proactive in managing their

resources, both earthly and spiritually. Also to prioritize building relationships and securing their eternal future through faithful stewardship.

What's mine really isn't mine, it was God's to begin with.

September 28 - Pentecost 16

Propers - BAS page 382

OLD TESTAMENT: [Jeremiah 32:1-3, 6-15](#)

Background

This passage is set in a time of great fear and uncertainty and national disaster.

The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in the 10th year of the reign of King Zedekiah. The 18th of Nebuchadrezzar. The army of the King of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem. Jeremiah was under arrest and confined to the court of the guard in Judah.

Jeremiah's purchase of a field is more symbolic rather than practical. He's buying into the metaphor of the purchase being representative of God's future restoration. This purchase symbolizes the future return of the exiles back in future generations.

The passage reminds us that even in dark times, faith and hope in God can endure. The sealing of the deeds in an earthenware jar are a hope for the future.

[Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16](#)

These verses speak to the security, trust and protection that God provides for those who dwell with Him. God is a refuge and a fortress. See Martin Luther's song. A mighty Fortress is our God.

God covers us metaphorically with his wings, the pinions on those wings that are in the Psalm are the outermost part of the wing that contains the flight feathers.

God protects against arrows, pestilence. Because the Psalmist has made the Lord his refuge, nothing evil will touch him.

God will command His angels to guard those who trust in Him to guard those. Here there is angelic protection.

God speaks to those who love Him and he and He says he will deliver them. God's presence may not always imply physical immunity against harm, but that His presence and His ultimate good will be in all circumstances.

EPISTLE: [1 Timothy 6:6-19](#)

This part of the epistle emphasizes that there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment.

The emphasis that we have brought nothing into this world and can take nothing out makes sense. From an Ecclesiastical point of view in the wisdom literature, when we die, someone else will enjoy the spoils of our work. Remember what Charles Spurgeon said. Six feet of dirt make all men equal.

True wealth is not things or money or power, True wealth is godliness and contentment.

Riches are fleeting and have brought many to ruin and destruction. Greed is a form of idolatry and the love of money is the root of all evil. Remember, we cannot serve two masters! We cannot serve God and money.

We are to pursue righteousness, gentleness, faith, love, endurance, fight the good faith and hold onto eternal life. We are to grasp to those things that are imperishable. Not things that are perishable.

For those who are rich, do not set your hope on those riches. Don't think you are better than anyone else.

Even the rich are to set their hope on God as it is God who provided those things in the first place.

Be generous and share, do good works. These are investments that last an eternity.

The conclusion of this reading is that this part of the epistle calls believers to prioritize spiritual values over material wealth, to live a life of contentment, and to use their resources to advance God's kingdom. It provides a framework for understanding what true wealth really is.

GOSPEL: [Luke 16:19-31](#)

The rich man lived in extreme extravagance and this rich man ignored the Lazarus who was a poor beggar covered in sores which the dogs licked.

Lazarus lay at the rich man's gate desiring to be fed with crumbs/scraps that fell from the rich man's table.

The beggar died and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. The Orthodox explanation is heaven or a place that is free from suffering. Abraham is mentioned among the righteous not only because of his faith, but because he showed hospitality to strangers.

The rich man died as all men do and was buried. Notice his wealth did not prevent his death and his judgement was sure as he had ignored the basic needs of someone else who had little and lived in luxury.

Notice that the rich man remains unnamed and is ultimately forgotten.

The chasm or gulf that is described here is not a geographical divide but a complete separation between virtue and wickedness. The torment is real in the sense that this rich fellow truly feels the heat so to speak. When the rich man addresses Abraham, he calls the rich man Son. Abraham shows compassion to the man. Compassion is shown to the most haughty and wretched of men, however, his life's actions have eternal consequences.

The rich man addressing Abraham as Father to get Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool his tongue shows that the rich man still believes that Lazarus is still a servant of his to do his bidding. The rich man even in agony really has learned nothing. His intercessions to Abraham are heard, but do not get his desired result. The finality of judgement is real and cannot be altered.

The plea to have his brothers warned is turned down. As Abraham has said, they have Moses and the prophets to warn them of the wrath to come. Not even someone coming back from the dead would be able to change their minds and alter their course in life.

Conclusion

The parable challenges the idea that wealth equates to blessing and poverty to curse. God's judgement is not based on earthly status but on righteousness and compassion. We are to be as believers mindful of the poor and use our resources to help those in need.