

BIBLE STUDY
March 15, 2021

THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Jeremiah 31: 31-34

John 12: 20-33

Hebrews 5: 7-9

1. Jeremiah 31: 31-34

- Jeremiah describes the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom returning from the nations where the Assyrians had settled them. He prophesies about their return and a reunion of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms and a new relationship with God. Their unfaithfulness to the covenant of Moses that led to the punishment of the exile was seen to have negated that first covenant.
- V. 31: The Lord will make a new covenant with both Judah (the South) and Israel (the North).
- V. 32: It will be different from the covenant of Moses that they broke by their sinfulness. They ruptured their relationship with God who was their Master.
- V. 33: In this new covenant the law will not be on tablets but written in their hearts. It will re-establish the relationship between them as God and his people.
- V. 34: Everyone will know God directly and not need further instruction by others. Everyone will know God from the most important to the least. The Lord will forgive their past sin and not remember it.
- Christians see this new covenant as a prefigurement of the New Covenant that Jesus establishes through his death and resurrection. It foresees the close relationship between God and us that Saint John speaks of in his Gospel when God the Father and Jesus make their dwelling place in us through the power of the Spirit.

2. John 12: 20-33

- V. 20-21: Greeks (Gentiles) are asking to see Jesus. They approach the two disciples with Greek names (Philip and Andrew) to arrange a meeting with Jesus. The mediator role that these two disciples play is reminiscent of the beginning of John's Gospel when Andrew brings Simon Peter to meet Jesus and Philip brings Nathaniel to meet Jesus. It suggests that the evangelization of the Gentiles will happen in a similar fashion to that of the Jews. We never find out if the Greeks actually get to meet Jesus. The episode serves as a springboard for Jesus to make two important pronouncements.
- V. 22: Jesus says: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Previously, on several occasions, Jesus has said that his hour has not yet come. The desire of the Greeks to meet him is a sign that the Gentile world is ready to believe in Jesus. In John's view of salvation, the preaching to the Gentiles will happen after Jesus' death and resurrection.

Therefore, it is now his hour to be glorified i.e. lifted up on the Cross so that everyone both Jew and Gentile can be drawn to him.

- V. 24: Jesus uses the figure of the grain of wheat. The single grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die for it to produce a harvest. This figure says that in the natural world there is something productive that comes from death. The death of the grain produces new life of a harvest. Jesus' death on the Cross will produce new life. His single life will produce a harvest of souls that will form a worldwide community of life and love.
- V. 25: Love/hate is a Semitic idiom for prefer/not prefer. Love life/hate life is same as the saying in Synoptic Gospels when Jesus says if we try to save our life, we will lose it and if we lose it, we will save it. Love/save life means to think that we are in control of our life and can manage it when really God is charge of our lives. To hate/lose our life means to recognize that God is in charge and we need to let go and let God. We put ourselves into God's hands and trust that he will make things work out well. Putting ourselves into God's hands will bring us to eternal life.
- V. 26: When we serve Jesus, we follow him on this way of the cross which is the way of unselfish and sacrificial love. If we follow Jesus in this way, we will also be where Jesus is—at the Father's heart.
- V. 27: Jesus feels the anxiety and fear that his approaching death brings. In John's Gospel, Jesus is always in control and very much the Son of God. His troubled spirit is a sign of how much his death on the Cross cost him. This scene is very much like the Agony in the Garden in Matthew, Mark and Luke. "Father, glorify your name!" is the equivalent of "Lord, not my will but yours be done."
- V. 28: God's voice is heard ratifying Jesus' acceptance of God's will. "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." Very similar to the Transfiguration, when the Father says, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."
- V. 29: The crowd is uncertain as to its meaning but recognizes it as a voice from heaven. Thunder is a sign of God revealing himself. Others think an angel has spoken to him. Angels are messengers of God.
- V. 30: Jesus says the voice is meant not for him but for the crowd. Jesus resumes his stately and dignified composure again.
- V. 31: This is the time of judgement. The crucifixion of Jesus will cause everyone to reveal their true intentions. It is the moment when the inner thoughts of the heart are revealed. It is the moment of judgement because we save or condemn ourselves based on our acceptance or rejection of Jesus as Son of God. If we believe in Jesus, we are saved. If we do not believe, we condemn ourselves. The death of Jesus will be the defeat of Satan, the ruler of this world.
- V. 32: When I am lifted up=Nailed to the Cross. Draw everyone to himself=bring salvation to both Jew and Gentile—all those who believe.
- V. 33: John makes explicit the meaning of being lifted up. It means his death on the Cross that is his glorification.

3. Hebrews 5: 7-9

- V. 7: In his humanity, Jesus experienced fear and distress over his upcoming death. In the Gospels, this is most apparent in the Agony in the Garden and in John 12: 27. Even in his exalted state, he is able to sympathize with us in our weakness because he experienced it himself. God heard his prayers and supplications because of his reverence, i.e., his obedience.
- V. 8: His Sonship means two things: first, he learned obedience through his sufferings as a son learns obedience to his father; second, he was exalted as Son and became the source of eternal life for all who also learn obedience from what they suffer. Like Philippians 3—he emptied himself and God raised him up.