

BIBLE STUDY
October 28, 2019

The Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom 11: 22--12:2

Luke 19: 1-10

2 Thessalonians 1: 11--2:2

1. Wisdom 11: 22--12:2

- Chapters 11-19 refer to the events of the Exodus and teach what can be learned from these events. This passage belongs to the second example which refers to the plagues in which frogs (2), gnats (3), and flies (4) are sent to torment the Egyptians.
- Vv. 15-21-The Egyptians worshiped "dumb serpents and worthless insects." In order to teach the Egyptians the error of their ways and to move them to repentance, God sent these animals and insects to punish them so that they saw that the very thing that brought them to sin was their punishment.

God could have sent them fierce wild beasts like bears and lions to destroy them. He also could have created brand new kinds of beasts that would kill them if they didn't die from fright to begin with. God could have killed them with one powerful blast. But, God is not like that. He is proportionate in everything he does. God's great power is demonstrated in his reserve—his mercy.

- V. 22-God is so powerful and so great that in comparison the whole universe is tiny like a grain on the scale or a drop of dew on the earth.
- V. 23-God is all powerful and so he decides to show mercy and overlook our sins so that we have a chance of repenting.
- V. 24- God loves us, his creation. He does not hate anything that he has created. If he hated them, he would not have created them.
- V. 25-Nothing could stay in existence if God did not will it so. Nothing could be saved if it were not God's will.
- V. 26-God spares us—shows mercy because we belong to him. He is the Ruler and also the Lover of our souls. His eternal spirit is in all things.
- V. 12:1-So God is gentle with sinners—rebukes little by little; he warns; reminds us of our sins so that we will turn away from sin and believe in him.

2. Luke 19: 1-10

- He intended to pass through the town: God has another plan. Jesus will later say he "must" go to his house—the divine necessity. It is God's will.
- Zacchaeus is a tax collector and a rich man. He will have a different response than the rich man in 18: 18-23 who cannot part with his possessions and went away sad.
- Zacchaeus has two problems in getting access to Jesus. First, he is a small man. Second, he is a tax collector and is excluded by the community for the way he makes his living and acquires his fortune. His small stature

symbolizes his alienation from the community. No one will make a space for him to see Jesus pass by. He is shut out. This is a barrier he must get across.

- He climbs a tree in order to see Jesus. An unusual act for a wealthy business man. It is not very dignified. It is an extravagant act. Many people in Luke's Gospel perform an extravagant act in order to attain or respond to salvation, e.g. the Samaritan leper, the dishonest steward, the woman with the hemorrhage, the centurion whose slave is near death, the sinful woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee.
- His dramatic gesture is enough to break through the barrier. Jesus sees him and says, "I must stay at your house." Must=divine purpose/God's will. Jesus is no longer passing through. He stays.
- Zacchaeus responds to this offer of salvation by quickly coming down from the tree and with great joy—he rejoices because he has the "knowledge of salvation." He feels it deep inside that he has been saved.
- The people grumble because Jesus is going to the house of a sinner. Like the story of the sinful woman at the house of Simon the Pharisee, they, like Simon, think that Jesus should know that he is a sinner and have nothing to do with him much less go to his house and have dinner with him. Those actions are against the Law.
- The people are a third person in the triangle of Zacchaeus and Jesus. The third person must respond to what they see happening. This is a favorite device of Luke. Examples are the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The older brother is the third person who must decide what to do. Simon the Pharisee is the third person in the triangle of Jesus and the sinful woman.
- Zacchaeus offers his own defense. I shall give half of my possessions to the poor. I will pay back any extortion four times over. This is a moment of conversion. He turns away from his former ways to begin a new way of life.
- The original Greek of the text uses not the future tense but the present tense. So, Zacchaeus is saying that he already gives to the poor and he pays back. This would mean that he is not a "bad" tax-collector. He is better than what they think. They have judged him unfairly. An alternative way of looking at this story.
- Jesus says: Today, salvation has come to this house. "Today" refers to the present dimension of salvation. Although salvation will be fully realized in the future in the Kingdom of God, we now have a foretaste of salvation. God truly enters into our life here and now. We enjoy a deep personal relationship with God now. When Jesus was at the synagogue of Nazareth he said, after reading Isaiah, today this passage is fulfilled in your midst. To the thief he was crucified with he said, Today, you will be with me in paradise."
- This man, too, is a descendent of Abraham. In other words, he is one of us. Can you accept him into your community? If he is making a change in his life, will you let him in? If you have judged him wrongly, can you

reconcile with him? Like the parable of the Prodigal Son, can we receive the repentant sinner back into our fold? Will we join in the celebration of his or her return or will we stand disapprovingly outside? We don't know what the crowd did just like we did not know what the older brother finally did. That throws the question back to us. What would you do?

- This is the mission of the Jesus, the Son of man---to bring sinners back home. Seek and save the lost.

3. 2 Thessalonians 1: 11—2:2

- This is an early letter of Paul written soon after the 1 Thessalonians which is the first written letter of Paul. As in 1 Thessalonians, the return of the Lord (Parousia) is a major preoccupation of the Thessalonians. However, instead of bringing them hope, it is bringing fear. Paul urges them not to become preoccupied with unknown future, but be concerned with the present—being watchful and vigilant, children of the light doing deeds of light, not darkness. If they behave in this way, they will always be ready for the Lord. They will not have to fear.
- 2 Thess begins—as do all of Paul's letters—with a thanksgiving hymn. Paul thanks God for the faith and love of the Thessalonians that is growing and flourishing.
- The Thessalonians are being persecuted for their faith and are suffering greatly. Paul tells them that God will make to them for what they are now suffering and punish those who are bringing them suffering.
- V. 11-Paul adds a prayer that God will make them worthy of their calling and bring to fulfillment his plan for them.
- V. 12- The quality of their lives will offer praise and glory to God and they will be filled with the grace of the Lord Jesus.
- V. 2:1- Paul warns them not to let anyone rob them of their peace by false statements about Jesus' coming and our "assembling" with him
- V. 2-don't be shaken or alarmed by a "spirit," or an oral statement or a false letter attributed to Paul saying that the end is near.