

Bible Study Lesson Summary, July 26, 2020

Today's lesson includes Days 131-137 on your reading guide.

Someone asked me a great question after class last week. "When did the Church start? This is one of those questions that remind me of my early years, when I had a ton of pieces of religious knowledge but wasn't able to put it all together to really make sense of it.

We have to ask what the church is? At different times it is called the Body of Christ, the Family of God on earth, or just the followers of Christ. If you think about those three names you should realize they are on different levels of connection to Jesus. Many people followed Jesus during His life on earth but it didn't last, like the parable of the sower. Many people get baptized and become a part of the Family of God but then they don't follow Jesus. It is being a part of the Body of Christ that emphasizes the most connection. Receiving Communion helps us with this. Pushing ourselves to attend Mass and receive the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ over and over again helps us to live out our family connection and start to live in synch with Jesus. We aren't the prodigal son. We are no longer just a piece of dirt that is on Christ's body. We become one with Him.

So when did this first happen? It was a process. It starts with hearing the Word of God, the starting to live our Baptism. Then working to be in Communion. So when Jesus started to have the apostles baptize people was the second step. The Last Supper was the third step. Pentecost was then the sending beginning of the second stage, when the apostles were given the courage to go out to the world to offer this to every nation. That was all the beginning of the Church. Along with that was the question of when did Sunday become the Lord's Day. That was the decision of the apostles to combine the day of rest, Sabbath, with the Resurrection which is the key to our church. Without it we are fools, for we will just die and all the other stuff would be pointless.

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

1Sm. 14: God helps Jonathan attain a victory but it causes great problems because his father, Saul, makes an oath that Jonathan does not know about. Saul wins a victory because of what his son started and vs. 23, "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day." This whole story foreshadows the church and the complex problems it will face with the Protestant Reformation. Good people trying to do good things but because there is no unity it creates problems. Vs. 31-33, the flesh with blood is not kosher. Consuming that blood is consuming the life force of another being. In God's eyes, that is disrespecting His creation by wanting to be something that we were not made to be.

1Sm. 15: Saul sins and in vs. 22 Samuel teaches: "Does the Lord so delight in holocausts and sacrifices as in obedience to the command of the Lord? Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission than the fat of rams." This is close to the teaching of Jesus, but Jesus says He desires mercy not sacrifice, which is the result in this chapter because Saul does ask for forgiveness and receives mercy although he is rejected as God's anointed.

1Sm. 16: Samuel looks for a more faithful person to anoint. In Bethlehem he finds David, the son of Jesse. He is handsome, “moreover, the Lord is with him.” (vs. 18) In vs. 20 bread, wine and a kid (goat) are the offering used by Jesse. Along with being a shepherd from Bethlehem, this also points David out as a Jesus figure. Saul has an evil spirit bothering him. When God’s grace is not with you, that is what happens.

1Sm. 17: The shepherd conquers the evil giant, Goliath, just like Jesus conquering death. Each was the main weapon of the opponent, Goliath the weapon of the Philistines, and death the weapon of the devil.

1Sm. 18: The battle between Saul and David begins. It seems like Saul represents the old covenant between God and the people of Israel, which they broke. David represents the new covenant. Circumcision symbolizes the old covenant, so we have Saul wanting David to get foreskins of the enemy. David proves he is certainly up to the task of having success beyond the Jewish people. Jonathan is close to David as John is close to Jesus. David has to fight to win his bride. Jesus has to fight for His bride also.

1Sm. 19: The battle continues with Saul trying to kill David, just like the priests of the old covenant try to kill Jesus. Saul’s family is not faithful. In vs. 11-17, his daughter, David’s wife Michal, has a household idol. The Israelites lived with idols, even to the time of Jesus. I don’t know what the “prophetic state” is that is described in vs. 22-24. It is obviously more than a Charismatic Prayer meeting.

1Sm. 20: Jonathan, son of Saul, tries to reconcile the old with the new, Saul with David. He is unsuccessful. This prefigures the battle of the early church where the Paul and Peter fight about whether the early Christians have to become Jewish. Saul represents the early Jewish Christians. David represents the new Gentile converts. Notice in vs. 31 that Jonathan is told that he will lose his inheritance if he helps David. St. John faced that same dilemma. His status as a part of the people of God by his being Jewish is gone and he risks all to follow Jesus, trusting that he will gain an even greater inheritance. Vs. 41, David prostrates himself on the ground before Jonathan. Jesus washed John’s feet.

1Sm. 21: David and his men eat of the holy bread, which Jesus actually mentions as a foreshadowing of Himself with His apostles (Mt.12:3). David also acts like a madman. So in vs. 15, “Finally Achish (King of Gath) said to his servants: “You see the man is mad.” Many people thought Jesus was mad, even some of his relatives. Mk.3:20-21, Jesus returned to the house with his disciples and again the crowd assembled, making it impossible for them to get any food whatever. When his family heard of this they came to take charge of him, saying, He is out of his mind.” Jesus seemed to be fulfilling the connection between food and the mental state that David had foreshadowed.

1Sm. 22: Saul has the followers of David killed. This foreshadows the persecution that Saul of the NT helped with, to kill the followers of Jesus. Vs. 19, “Saul also put the priestly city of Nob to the sword, including men and women, children and infants, and oxen, asses and sheep.” He is

worse than King Herod would end up being, but Nero also did this in the year 66 A.D. when he destroyed the temple.

1Sm. 23: Vs. 14b, “Though Saul sought him continually, the Lord did not deliver David into his grasp.” The Pharisees and then the High Priests tried to trip up Jesus and get rid of Him but He eluded them until His hour had come. Saul continues to try to kill David, but Jonathan helps David. This foreshadows the continued persecution that Christians suffered, but how some of the Israelites were sympathetic.

1Sm. 24: David spares Saul’s life and is temporarily reconciled with him. Jesus did not attack the High Priests. At Saul’s request, David promises not to destroy Saul’s descendants. When the Christians came in some power they did not try to destroy the Israelites. As Jesus taught, they did not return the persecution.

1Sm. 25: In vs. 1, Samuel dies and is buried. He is no longer needed for the OT foreshadow of Jesus, David, is ready to go to work. Just like John the Baptist. The Middle East has many rules about hospitality. Nabal does not follow them and snubs David and his men. Abigail, the wife of Nabal, intercedes for her husband with David. This is an image of the Saints of the early Church, especially Mary, in that they intercede for us. Nabal dies of fright when he finds out how God’s anointed one could have treated him. So intercession can only go so far. But there are interesting bits of the conversation to note. Vs. 25-26, Abigail calls her husband a fool and then wishes that enemies of David would end up the same way. In vs. 22 David says: “May God do thus and so to David, if by morning I leave a single male alive among all those who belong to him.” In vs. 31 Abigail says: “...you shall not have this as a qualm or burden on your conscience, my lord, for having shed innocent blood or for having avenged yourself personally. When the Lord confers this benefit on your lordship, remember your handmaid.” God takes care of Nabal’s death and David is spared the guilt of having to kill him, and then marries Abigail. I guess that this is how David takes care of widows. First Bathsheba and now Abigail.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Psalms 122: “Let us go to the house of the Lord.” The New Jerusalem is Heaven. Jerusalem means “new peace.” That is why Jesus was so happy to Ascend to Heaven, back to the place Dad build.

Psalms 123: Jesus prays to the Father for us, “Show us favor, Lord...” I see this psalm as one Jesus could have started every morning with.

Psalm 124: Jesus thanks the Father for protecting us. Vs. 8 is very familiar: “Our help is the name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.” A version of it is included in a bishop’s blessing. The Lord be with you. And with your spirit. Bishop: Blessed be the name of the Lord. Us: Both now and forever. Bishop: Our help is in the name of the Lord. Us: Who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 125: Continues with the theme of the Lord being the protector, but is more specific in helping us understand that Jerusalem is heaven. Vs. 2. “As mountains surround Jerusalem, the Lord surrounds his people both now and forever.” Only heaven stands “forever.”

Psalm 126: The Lord will restore what we have lost in the New Zion. This is one that focuses on a return from exile. We should all be able to relate to it as we long for our true home in heaven. Vs. 5-6 are a prayer like the Beatitudes. Those who sow in tears will reap with cries of joy. Those who go forth weeping, carrying sacks of seed, will return with cries of joy, carrying their bundled sheaves. Just like blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.

Psalm 127: This psalm is quoted often in prayers. Vs. 1, “Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build. Unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep watch.” The longer I work as a priest, and I hope that the longer you work as parents, the more this line has power. We are so inadequate without God’s help. Also vs. 3, “Children too are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward.” This is so different from our culture in which health care now refers to pregnancy as an illness that you must take a pill to keep from happening or have an abortion to cure pregnancy; all paid for under the name of women’s reproductive health care.

Psalm 128: A prayer for a happy home. An olive tree is fruitful in many ways and is still very valuable in Israel. Each mature tree can be worth about a \$1000 year. Our trees only cost that much to take down. The peace described in this psalm is hard for families to hold onto, but it is what we all yearn for as members of the family of God, the Father.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK

Mk. 7: This chapter is a teaching to clarify issues with the OT and/or the tradition of the elders. Vs. 19 is a good summary: “since it enters not the heart but the stomach and passes out into the latrine? (Thus he declared all foods clean.)” So E.coli won’t send you to hell but a potty mouth may. So will “evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly.” Are people with those sins lost? We haven’t heard from Mark whether Jesus can forgive sin yet.

Vs. 27, Jesus is seemingly rude to the foreigner, but it is to show that it is faith in him that saves a person. Vs. 36-37, the deaf man is just like everyone else in not keeping these miracles quiet. I wouldn't have been able to keep it quiet. Jesus tries to keep these people quiet about the miracles, so he can travel freely or to keep from getting killed too fast. I don't know.

Mk. 8: This chapter starts with the second multiplication, this time with no fish. Right after this the Pharisees want a sign. Weren't they watching? So Jesus makes a point of the two multiplication miracles to make a point that the Pharisees are not catching on. The problem is that the apostles aren't either.

We start with the curing of the blind man of Bethsaida, which is northwest of Capernaum. Then they head further north to Caesarea Philippi where a pagan temple stood as part of a rock face of a cliff. Typical of Mark, the significance of this is not mentioned. Just that Peter is smart enough to call Jesus the Messiah. Then Jesus predicts His passion and Peter gets himself into trouble for thinking like a human instead of with divine inspiration. Jesus then explains that a disciple must be willing to lose his life in order to save it, which is what He just predicted He would do.

Mk. 9: Now we have more preparation of Jesus' death. Vs. 1, "there are some standing who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God" is about His resurrection. That is when the kingdom of God reigns, by having conquered the weapon of the enemy. He is not starting a Highlander series about immortals. Then you have the Transfiguration which is to encourage Peter, James & John. Elijah is mentioned for he must come before the coming of the kingdom. He was just at the Transfiguration but in vs. 13 Jesus seems to be referring to John the Baptist. Now the four of them come to the rest of the disciples and Jesus has to heal a boy that the disciples couldn't handle. In vs. 24 the boy's father gives a great line for all of us: "I do believe, help my unbelief!" Then the boy is healed by prayer and the second prediction of the passion happens.

In vs. 33, the apostles get another lesson on discipleship. They must be the servants of all. Also, in receiving a child you are receiving Jesus and God. The story of the exorcism in vs. 38-41 underscores that if you are serving the Lord and doing His work you are okay.

Then in vs. 42-48 we get dire warnings, not good old sweet Jesus talk.

The salt and fire message in vs. 49-50 is again about sacrifice for that is how a sacrifice is prepared, salted and burned.

Mk. 10:1-31: This chapter starts with the difficult teaching on the indissolubility of marriage. Then Jesus blesses the children and says the kingdom is for them. These two lessons belong together. Marriage is about children and protecting them. The story of the rich man starting in vs. 17 has inspired many Saints to follow Jesus drastically. This also is really about family. Vs. 29: "Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come. He is defining how family will work.