

Bible Study

Twentieth-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, cycle C

Opening Prayer: (Sign of the Cross) “Good and gracious God, we place ourselves in the awareness of your presence. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us through this time of reflection and prayer, so that we might come to know you more fully and to be more faithful disciples. We ask this through Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.”

Focusing Questions

1. There is an old proverb: “The love of money is the root of all evil.” Do you believe that?
2. Tell about a recent situation in which you experienced injustice or witnessed it happening to another.

Commentary before the First Reading: Amos 8:4-7

We have been reading from a variety of books in the Old Testament recently. The Church chose these readings specifically so that the First Reading would connect thematically with our series of readings from Saint Luke’s Gospel. This reading from the Book of the prophet Amos presents a theme that is consistent throughout both the Old and the New Testament: that widows, orphans, and the needy – the most financially vulnerable members of Jewish society – are the responsibility of all who call themselves followers of the one, true God. By the way, an ephah was a measurement for grain, roughly equal in size to a bushel, and a shekel was a coin.

Read the First Reading aloud.

1. Why are the business people in this reading impatient for the end of the Sabbath religious observances? What does this say about their priorities?
2. Which of the evil actions listed is probably the most despicable?
3. According to this reading, what is worse than ignoring the poor and the needy?
4. What is the implied conclusion of the last verse – that is, will God only remember?

Commentary before the Second Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

We continue our two months of reading excerpts from Saint Paul’s two letters to Saint Timothy, his friend and companion in ministry. In this reading Saint Paul is speaking about the various forms of prayer within the Eucharist. He follows that with one of the oldest-known forms of a creed, and concludes with an affirmation of his own role as Apostle to the Gentiles.

Read the Second Reading aloud.

1. Identify the content or purpose of the 4 types of prayers named in verse 1?
2. What are the 2 reasons, according to Saint Paul, that we should pray for those in authority?
3. When did Jesus give the testimony referred to in verse 6?
4. Translations of verse 8 are consistent in the phrase “the men;” they are specific about the gender. What does that tell us about community prayer at that time?
5. Which verse reminded Timothy (and us) that salvation and faith were intended by God to be universal?

Commentary before the Gospel Reading: Luke 16:1-13

A brief explanation will help to set this reading in a proper context. In ancient Israel it was common for the rich to hire someone or to appoint a slave as steward, who would handle many of the daily business transactions in the master’s name. The steward’s payment was in the form of an additional amount of whatever was owed to the master. The steward in this parable is not stealing from his master; he is giving up his own commission in order to gain favor with the debtors. They would pay only what they owed to the master.

Read the Gospel Reading aloud.

1. Several verses in this reading could be cited as being the point of the parable. Which would you choose as the point Jesus was making?
2. What do you think Jesus means when he calls wealth “dishonest”?
3. “Prudent” means “wise, acting with the future in mind.” Some translations use the words “shrewd” or “astute” instead. Explain how the steward was “prudent” in that sense? Why is that praiseworthy?
4. How would you reword verse 9 so that it is more easily understood?
5. Why is it so hard to love God with one’s whole heart and to love material possessions at the same time?

Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives

1. What is the greatest matter with which you have had to be trustworthy? How did you do?
2. Comment on this statement: "What we own is not our own."
3. Who are some of those in our society who are taken advantage of by the powerful or the wealthy?
4. Social injustice of some form is present in every society. Identify one or more ways that you perhaps contribute, simply by going about your usual way of living, resulting in making life harder for someone else somewhere. Can that be changed, or is it just a "fact of life"?
5. Is it possible to be both holy and wealthy? If so, explain how a person of faith should deal with money and possessions?
6. How could you be more resourceful ("prudent") in using your possessions to become a better person or to evangelize others (draw them closer to God)?

Closing Prayer

"Lord, you are our God, you alone. Send your Spirit to help us be as faithful to you as you are to us. Open our eyes to see injustice where it exists in the world about us. Open our hearts to see you in our brothers and sisters. Open our minds to see the truth about our responsibility to be wise stewards of your gifts and compassionate disciples toward the poor. We make this prayer in your name, Jesus Christ, for this is what you would ask of the Father for us. Amen." (Sign of the Cross)