

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR OCTOBER 20, 2024

Isaiah 53:4-12

- This passage is perhaps the best known of Isaiah's "servant songs." It has been used by Christians throughout the centuries as describing Jesus as the "suffering servant." Yet, in its original context, this was composed during the Exile and was a description of Israel and all that it had suffered. Read through from that perspective, what understanding and hope would this passage give to the people in Exile?
- The passage also challenges us when we are tempted to look at the suffering and pain in our country and world and place the blame outside of ourselves. The passage invites us to see the pain and suffering of our world as a result of how we are. In light of this, reflect again on these opening verses: "Surely he [our country, our world] has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him [our country, our world] stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he [our country, our world] was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities."

Psalms 91:9-16

- What hope and promise does this psalm give?
- Note that in the temptations of Jesus, Satan uses 91:11-12 to justify having Jesus throw himself down from the temple. How can we keep ourselves from perverting the meaning of Scripture? How do we determine if an interpretation strays from what is intended?
- We have an interesting addition in verse 13. Whereas as "treading upon" and "trampling down" upon a serpent or viper makes sense, we do not associate those actions on lions. By adding in the reference to lions, the psalm emphasizes the symbolic nature of this action as all of these creatures represent the dangers that God gives us the power over.
- How do we deal with the disconnect we can often feel when we read this psalm? As we read or chant the verse, "No evil shall befall you, nor shall affliction come near your dwelling," what do we do when we face affliction?
- How does this psalm fit with any themes found in Isaiah 53 or Mark 10? Especially as both passages speak about the suffering that we endure, often willingly as we follow in the way of Jesus?

Hebrews 5:1-10

- With the end of Hebrews 4 from last week and the beginning of Hebrews 5 this week, the writer describes Jesus as "a great high priest" (4:14). This discussion will extend through chapter 10, with chapters 9-10 describing Jesus not just as priest but also as sacrifice. The argument about Jesus as a high priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" presents a fascinating journey into a very different (for us!) style of interpretation. It proceeds this way:
 - The writer begins in Hebrews 3 by comparing Jesus to Joshua, son of Nun (Jesus and Joshua are the same word in Greek), leaning on a quote from Psalm 95, "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." The psalm speaks about the time of the Israelites in the wilderness and encourages people to not follow in their example. Thus, as Joshua leads them to the "rest" of the Promised Land, so Jesus/Joshua will lead us to the real/genuine "rest" of God.
 - This description of Jesus as Joshua triggers the writer to discuss Jesus as high priest, because of another Joshua/Jesus in the Old Testament: Joshua who is the high priest in Zechariah.
 - But if Jesus is a high priest, what sort of high priest is he? The high priests that the people would know would be from the line of Aaron, who are all mortal human beings?

- The writer turns to another high priest in Psalm 110 – “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek” – and a discussion of who Melchizedek is. Most of this conversation gets taken up in Hebrews 7, but who is Melchizedek?
 - Melchizedek simply means “king of righteousness,” and is named in Genesis 14 as the king of Salem, which translated would be “king of peace.”
 - Further, Abraham in Genesis 14 gives a tenth of what he has to Melchizedek and is blessed by him.
 - Further – and most important for Hebrews – Melchizedek is introduced without any lineage. So, he becomes a type, a figure, for Jesus: “Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. See how great he is! Even Abraham the patriarch gave him a tenth of the spoils.” (Hebrews 7:3-4)
- So, Hebrews can have Jesus be a high priest, not according to a “human” line like Aaron, but according to a “divine” line like Melchizedek.
- The imaginative interpretation that Hebrews employs invites us to continue to imagine and re-imagine who God is and who God calls us to be, while remaining true to how God is revealed in Jesus. Hebrews invites us to dive deeply into Scripture to find new ways to express God and Jesus.

Mark 10:35-45

- This passage follows immediately after Jesus has predicted his suffering and death *for a third time!* The disciples – especially James and John – seem to either ignore or completely misunderstand what Jesus is talking about. When do we ignore what Jesus is saying? When do we misunderstand? What helps us stay on track?
- What does it mean to you to be a servant?