

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR JANUARY 19, 2025

Isaiah 62:1-5

- Isaiah proclaimed these words while Judah remained in Exile. God promises that Judah will be restored. Though the people feel Forsaken and Desolate, God promises that they will become a Delight.
- Though proclaimed for a distant people, we also hear these words as a promise in our struggles. God is with us when we feel forsaken and desolate. God longs to restore us to a place of delight.

Psalm 36:5-10

- Like so many of the psalms, this psalm invites us to imaginatively participate in its imagery. Picture God's love and faithfulness reaching to the heavens. See the righteousness or justice of God as mighty mountains. Imagine yourself under the wings of God or drinking from God as from a river. This psalm is meant to act on us in the same manner as Martin Luther King's "dream" from 61 years ago. What feelings or impressions do you have as you imagine yourself into this psalm?
- God doesn't forget the animals! Note how all living creatures are included in God's saving acts.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

- The Corinthian church is a deeply divided church over many issues, including who they follow (Peter? Apollos? Paul?), a man now sleeping with his widowed step-mother, lawsuits, different points of view about food sacrificed to idols, mistreatment of the poor during communion, different beliefs about the resurrection, and certain people proclaiming that their spiritual gift is better than others. Here in chapters 12 and 13 – which will be the second lesson for the next three weeks – Paul stresses that what unites us is the Spirit and that what must motivate us is love. Why are we given these different gifts? Paul says here that it is "for the common good." Would this not be a refreshing concept not just for our churches but for our country and political situation as well!
- When Paul declares that "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit," he reminds us that though churches have different practices and beliefs we are united by our confession of Jesus as Lord.
- This passage challenges us to consider our different gifts. What are your gifts or talents? Are you using them for "the common good"? If not, what could that look like for you? Where might you begin?

John 2:1-11

- If you listen to the Preface for Epiphany (sung part) before the Words of Institution, this passage represents the third major event of Epiphany:
 - By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations
 - In the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son
 - And in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory
- The image of the wedding or the wedding feast is common throughout Scripture (for example, our first lesson). In the parables of Jesus (and in Revelation!), the wedding feast often represents the coming Kingdom of God and/or the end of time, signifying that it is a time of celebration and rejoicing. When John has this miracle as the first of the signs of Jesus, he indicates that the coming of Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom of God into this world.
- On the one hand, John adds humor to this passage as the mother of Jesus forces Jesus to perform the miracle. On the other hand, John offers a deeper meaning. John never names the mother of Jesus, causing some to speculate that she represents the church. If so, this event could be read as the church inviting Jesus to transform things.
- Finally, note how much water is turned into wine. This water was meant for Jewish rites of purification. On another level, this miracle is meant to show how Jesus transforms these religious acts and imbues them with life and celebration. Where do our religious acts need such transformation?