

17th Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 20) September 20, 2015

Living the Lectionary

**A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday.
An opportunity to make the rhythms of the readings
become a part of the rhythms of your life.**

Available on line at:

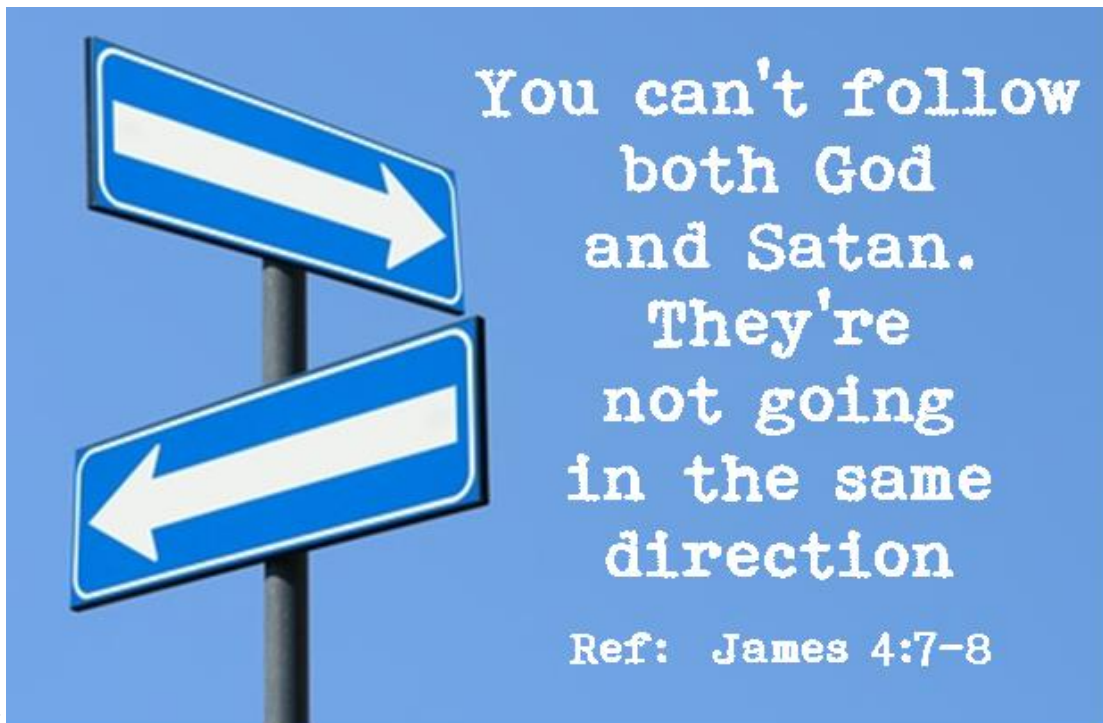
www.bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies

September 17, 2015 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH

*Also presented as a part of the worship service at Puritas Lutheran Church,
13812 Bellaire Road, Cleveland, OH Sundays at 11:30 AM and 5:30 PM.*

(Shut –in service on Tues/Wed. E-mail puritaspastor@hotmail.com for details.)



www.coollikechrist is the source but may have security issues.

Hymn of the Day 17th Sunday after Pentecost
Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 851 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 442
“Lord of glory, You have bought us”

The tune, Hyfrydol, is well known. Listen to two contrasting videos of this melody.

The first is a simple presentation of the melody by Bethany Woelmer on harp.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TveuEcubVYw>

The second is by organist Geoff Olsen playing a Ralph Vaughan Williams prelude based on this melody. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38h1yGOtZFU>

[New International Version \(NIV\)](#)

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Jeremiah 11:18-20 (*next week – Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29*)

Plot Against Jeremiah

¹⁸ Because the LORD revealed their plot to me, I knew it, for at that time he showed me what they were doing. ¹⁹ I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying,

“Let us destroy the tree and its fruit;
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
that his name be remembered no more.”

²⁰ But you, LORD Almighty, who judge righteously
and test the heart and mind,
let me see your vengeance on them,
for to you I have committed my cause.

“In this chapter, I. God by the prophet puts the people in mind of the covenant he had made with their fathers, and how much he had insisted upon it, as the condition of the covenant, that they should be obedient to him ([v. 1-7](#)). II. He charges it upon them that they, in succession to their fathers, and in confederacy among themselves, had obstinately refused to obey him ([v. 8-10](#)). III. He threatens to punish them with utter ruin for their disobedience, especially for their idolatry ([v. 11](#), [v. 13](#)), and tells them that their idols should not save them ([v. 12](#)), that their prophets should not pray for them ([v. 14](#)); he also justifies his proceedings herein, they having brought all this mischief upon themselves by their own folly and wilfulness ([v. 15-17](#)). IV. Here is an account of a conspiracy formed against Jeremiah by his fellow-citizens, the men of Anathoth; God’s discovery of it to him ([v. 18](#), [v. 19](#)), his prayer against them ([v. 20](#)), and a prediction of God’s judgments upon them for it ([v. 21-23](#)).”

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/jeremiah/11.html>

Psalm 54 (*Psalm 104:27-35*)

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A maskil^[b] of David. When the Ziphites had gone to Saul and said, "Is not David hiding among us?"

- ¹ Save me, O God, by your name;
vindicate me by your might.
- ² Hear my prayer, O God;
listen to the words of my mouth.
- ³ Arrogant foes are attacking me;
ruthless people are trying to kill me—
people without regard for God.^[c]
- ⁴ Surely God is my help;
the Lord is the one who sustains me.
- ⁵ Let evil recoil on those who slander me;
in your faithfulness destroy them.
- ⁶ I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you;
I will praise your name, LORD, for it is good.
- ⁷ You have delivered me from all my troubles,
and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

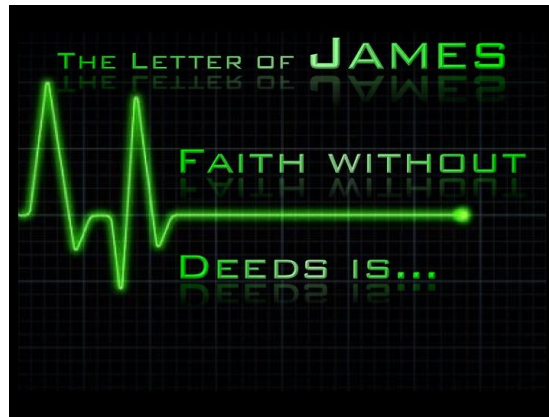
Footnotes:

- a. [Psalm 54:1](#) In Hebrew texts 54:1-7 is numbered 54:3-9.
- b. [Psalm 54:1](#) Title: Probably a literary or musical term
- c. [Psalm 54:3](#) The Hebrew has *Selah* (a word of uncertain meaning) here.

“ZIPHITES (zîf'īts, Heb. zîphî). The inhabitants of Ziph, whether the name designated the town or the wilderness surrounding it (1Sam.23.14-1Sam.23.23; 1Sam.26.1-1Sam.26.5). Twice, apparently, David hid in their vicinity when being pursued by King Saul. Each time the Ziphites, though of David's tribe, told Saul of his location. They seemed to think it better to support the reigning king than to be kind to David, whom they considered a rebel.” - See more at: <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/ziphites#sthash.vqsnyrMn.dpuf>

“Some of the Psalms were called "a maskil" normally in the phrase "a maskil of David." In the NASB it said a maskil was a "Skillful, Poetic, or Didactic Psalm." <http://maskil.us/about.html>

The link will take you to a musical outreach who “ took the name Maskil from the Psalms... In the NASB it said a maskil was a "Skillful, Poetic, or Didactic Psalm." We thought that sounded like a fitting name because that's what we wanted to be (skillful, and poetic), and that's what we wanted to do (teach the Psalms with music, didactic).



<http://www.coonapc.com/?cat=25>

Coonabarabran Presbyterian Church, Australia

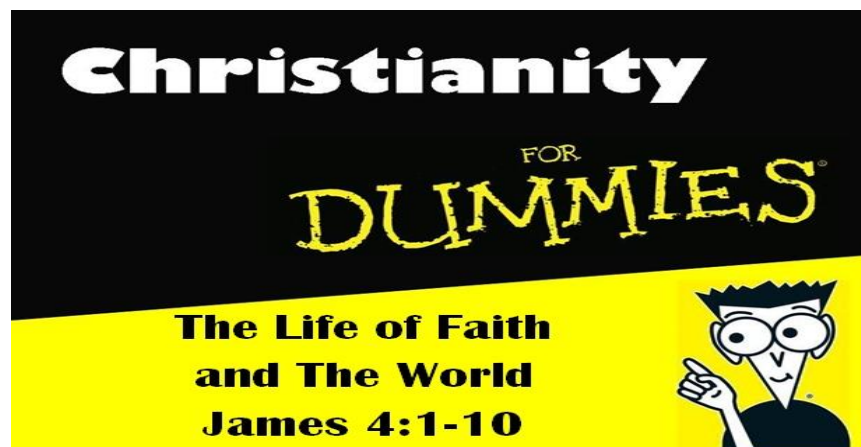
James 3:13-4:10 (*James 5:(1-12) 13-20*) Readings from James will continue through September 27. Read the article at <http://beggarsallreformation.blogspot.com/2009/01/luther-on-book-of-jamesrevisted.html> for an additional view on Luther and the book of James.

Two Kinds of Wisdom

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.



<http://cedarstreetchurch.org/wp/james-41-10/> 1705 Cedar St, Holt, MI 48842

Submit Yourselves to God

4 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴ You adulterous people,^[a] don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us^[b]? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud
but shows favor to the humble.”^[c]

⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Footnotes:

- a. [James 4:4](#) An allusion to covenant unfaithfulness; see Hosea 3:1.
- b. [James 4:5](#) Or *that the spirit he caused to dwell in us envies intensely*; or *that the Spirit he caused to dwell in us longs jealously*
- c. [James 4:6](#) Prov. 3:34

“The Holy Gospel according to St Mark, the 9th Chapter” **“Glory to You, O Lord”**

Mark 9:30-37 (*Mark 9:38-50*)

Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

³⁰ They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, **“The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”** ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

³³ They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” ³⁴ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

³⁵ Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

³⁶ He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“This is the third week of our "What if?" approach to texts from Mark.

We've approached the encounter between the Syro-Phoenician woman and Jesus (7:24-37) and Peter's encounter with him (8:27-38) through the lens of "*What if*" questions.

Between Peter's confession in 8:29 and today's text from 9:30-37, Jesus has been busy. He has been transfigured on a mountain before Peter, James and John (9:2-8), and he has healed a boy with a spirit when his disciples were unable to (9:14-29).

In today's lesson (9:30-37), Jesus foretells his resurrection, chastises his disciples for arguing about who was the greatest among them, and points to a child as a model for discipleship.

Every text is a sandwich, with something before it and something after it. This text is the filling between two exorcisms. In the text before this, the disciples tried to exorcise a demon from a boy but failed, apparently because they didn't pray (9:28-29). Jesus chastises them in harsh terms "How much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you?" (9:19). In the text that follows this, the disciples come to Jesus complaining that they had seen a man casting out demons in Jesus' name. They whine to Jesus "We tried to stop him because he was not following us" (9:38). We didn't give him permission; he didn't have the right credentials, so how could he be a channel of healing?

Two "What if?" questions come to my mind when I look at this text in the context of what comes directly before it.

1. What if the disciples had prayed before they tried to exorcise the spirit from the boy (8:14-29)?
2. What if they had not been afraid to ask Jesus when they did not understand his prediction of his suffering and death? (9:32)

1. What if the disciples had prayed before they tried to exorcise the spirit from the boy?

Would they have been able to be channels of divine healing and experience peace and joy? Would their spiritual understanding have increased? I don't know. I only know what the text reveals: that their failure to pray is followed by their failure to understand Jesus' prediction of

his suffering and death (9:30-32). This, after Jesus' promise that "to you has been given the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mark 4:11). Failure to pray is followed by failure to understand something Jesus has promised them they have access to. "They did not understand what he was saying and they were afraid to ask him" (9:32).

2. What if they had not been afraid to ask him?

I suspect they were afraid to ask him because their priority was how they would look to each other if they did not understand. I became afraid to ask questions in algebra II, geometry, and trigonometry in high school. I lacked aptitude. I tried, but it did not come easily, or really, at all. I remember the feeling of just not understanding something, of feeling like everyone was getting it but me. I felt stupid and frustrated.

There was a ray of hope on the first day of geometry class in the ninth grade. We had a new, young teacher who waxed eloquent about the "beauty of mathematics." I felt momentarily enthused and energized, but after about my second question, she got an annoyed look on her face. I stopped asking and just muddled through with an anxious mind, memorizing formulas rather than understanding their derivations, grateful for the C at the end of the year. Why did I become afraid to ask? Because I didn't want to look stupid in front of the teacher and my classmates. I didn't want to risk public chastisement. Apparently, my fear of how I would look in others' eyes was stronger than my desire to understand the mysteries of mathematics.

What if the disciples hadn't been afraid to ask? Sometimes I think the Jesus of the Gospel of Mark is a little tough on the disciples. They are probably, like us, doing the best they can. He's tough, but is he really the kind of teacher who would meet a sincere desire for understanding with annoyance and dismissal? Do we really need to be afraid to ask Jesus to help us follow him, understand to the limits of our human wisdom, and trust where it leaves off?

Throughout Mark's Gospel, the disciples remain at about the same level of understanding, or lack thereof. It was partly because they were afraid to ask. But I think it was partly because their burning question was not, "How can I better understand and live out Jesus' identity and mission?", but rather, "How can I be the greatest?"

What if lack of prayer led to lack of understanding and fear of asking for help? We may not understand the mystery of prayer, what it does and how it does it, but we all know what happens when we don't pray. We all know that not praying leads to a cycle of scattered thoughts, bad decisions and actions we later regret. This seems to be what happened to the disciples in this text. In the text from 8:27-38, we saw how Peter's rebuke instigated Jesus' teaching about the way of the cross. Here again, the disciples' mistaken priorities call forth a clear teaching from Jesus. This time it is about who is greatest.

In looking at the text, it seems to me that the disciples' argument has four roots:

- *fear* that they have fallen in Jesus' estimation (9:19)
- *insecurity* at their failure to heal the boy (9:29)

- resentment toward one another as Jesus chastises them
- eagerness to compete to regain his approval

If I were preaching on this text, I'd remember the disciples negative responses because the first letter of each one spells out *f-i-r-e*. The disciples could not put aside these heated thoughts so that they could understand what Jesus was trying to tell them.

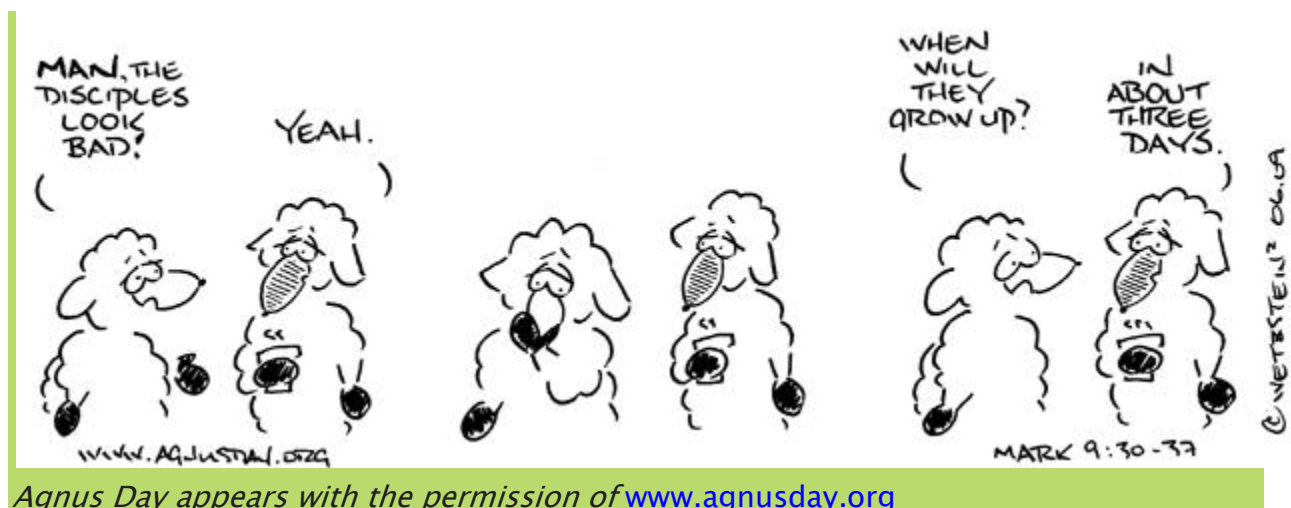
Their focus on their reputations, a priority each of them held inside, comes to the surface in an argument over who was the greatest that would make them all look small (9:33-37). It turns out that to be great is not to impress crowds with displays of healing, or to try to become the teacher's pet of a Teacher who refuses to play favorites.

I've heard sermons on this text that make the point we have to become children to be great. They conclude by encouraging us to focus on our inward lives, on becoming more pure, more innocent, more humble, more spontaneous, more trusting.

It turns out that to be great is to be focused on something quite other than oneself. It turns out that greatness lies in welcoming one who is not viewed as great by the culture, the child, the one who is beyond the circle, who needs a welcome.

So here is the final "What if?" question. What if we actually did that?

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