

## Bible Tuesday for Pentecost V, 2019

### Deuteronomy 30:9-14

9 The Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all your undertakings, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your soil. For the Lord will again take delight in prospering you, just as he delighted in prospering your ancestors, 10 when you obey the Lord your God by observing his commandments and decrees that are written in this book of the law, because you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 11 Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. 12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" 14 No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.

When the Israelites found themselves slaves to the Egyptians, they believed God had abandoned or forgotten them. Though God showed otherwise by sending Moses and saving the Israelites from the Egyptian army, the Israelites proved their lack of trust in God with the golden calf incident. The result was the 40 year wilderness wandering.

The book of Deuteronomy is "the blessings and the curses that I have set before you [for] you [to] take to heart amidst the various nations to which the Lord your God has sent you, and for you to return to the Lord, your God, you and your children to heed His commands with all your heart and soul..." Deut. 30:1-2. Before this book, God's word came to Israel through Moses and Aaron. In verse 10, Moses states that God's Law is now written in this book.

The pagan religions of the Canaanites, into which God was planting the Israelites, believed that some special human had to climb the heights to find the gods and receive their commands, or descend into the underworld, or depths of the sea to commune with the gods of those places. Moses declares that God's word is within each Israelite.

### Psalm 25:1-10

1 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. 2 O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. 3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. 4 Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. 5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. 6 Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. 7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord! 8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. 9 He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. 10 All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

This psalm is an acrostic poem which alternates every verse between petition and declarations of trust.

“Lift up my soul...” - I attempt to elevate all that is me into God’s sight to receive God’s attention.

“Do not let me be put to shame” – Middle eastern cultures feared shaming the way American’s fear pain and homelessness. Shame was something to be avoided at all costs. If one family’s daughter and another family’s son were caught in adultery, the families would stone their own daughter and son in order to get out from under that shame. In the US, that is murder. In ancient Middle Eastern society, that was culturally expected.

“Do not let those who wait for you...” – “They that wait upon the Lord” are those who depend on God and wait for God to act.

Note that the psalmist does not ask for God’s love, but rather guidance in God’s way, in God’s wisdom. Honor and proper knowledge are believed to be living righteously with God.

“Be mindful of your mercy” – The psalmist asks for God to remember that God made a covenant with Abraham and all Israel, to forgive them and treat them as His own children, and that God remember His quality of mercy over and above His authority to judge and condemn.

“Sins of my youth” – Present in this psalm is a Baptist and Pentecostal belief that one may have been sinful at a past point but can perfect one’s self enough to become purely holy and sinless.

Colossians 1:1-14

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. 3 In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. 7 This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, 8 and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit. 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. 11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13

He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

This letter is to a Christian community in the city of Colossae, a city of major importance in the 400's BCE but in the time of Paul, a city in decline. It had a large Jewish population who were known for worshiping angels, especially the archangel, Gabriel. Scholars speculate Epaphras was the founder of this congregation, and that Paul likely never actually visited there. In keeping with this thought, the letter is slightly more formal than Paul's letters to the congregations in Corinth and the Philippi, people he visited multiple times.

Paul introduces himself in the salutation with the words, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Certainly that could be said of all the apostles, since they were all chosen by Jesus who is God. However, Paul sets himself apart from the other 12 apostles since he never actually met Jesus, but rather saw him in a vision on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus.

"To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters" – In Paul's other letters, "saints" are the baptized faithful followers of Jesus. I don't know if Paul is trying to indicate something different in this letter or if he is employing a common Hebrew writing style of saying the same thing twice with slight variation in vocabulary.

Note Paul's emphasis that the Holy Spirit bears fruit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, generosity, and self-control) in believers that grow and bear fruit in their community and the Church. This addresses the question many early Christians asked, "If Jesus is returning any moment now, why do we have to work? Why not just wait for Jesus?" Paul's answer is, "Jesus commanded that we go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. How can you do that when you are just sitting and waiting? Are you not to be proclaiming the gospel?!"

#### Luke 10:25-37

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.

In Jewish culture and under the Law of Moses, lawyers are both religious and societal leaders. The average citizen would have expected the lawyers to scrutinize this Johnny-Come-Lately itinerate rabbi.

"Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Recall what I have written in the past, that a major division existed in the government of the Jews between those who believed in eternal life after death, the Pharisees, and those who did not, the Sadducees. It is unclear to which belief system this lawyer belonged but he may be posing the issue to discredit Jesus.

26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

Jesus does not attempt to debate whether or not there is eternal life, even after death. Jesus merely proceeds, and in so doing, states that eternal life is a fact, not a matter of debate.

27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

The layer quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:8. To paraphrase, "You are to love God with all your emotion, everything that is you, with all your physical power, and with all your mental acuity, and you are to respect, honor, and appreciate your neighbor, treating him/her at least as well as you treat yourself."

28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

Jesus affirms the Law of Moses and the crux of God's covenantal demand of humanity: love of God, self, and neighbor. Jesus is not trapped in any new, heretical teaching.

29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"  
Whoops!

30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

According to scholars, in Roman times this event was not hypothetical but as common place as semis on the side of the highway with the cones out and their hoods open.

31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

Priests and Levites both had the Law of Moses which taught over and over and over again that Jews were to be helpful and hospitable to the traveler, the alien, the orphan, and the widow. These two men should have been the heroes of this story but instead acted in their own self interests.

33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

When Assyria conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, they hauled away the educated people: religious leaders, military, wealthy, into Assyria. Left behind were the farmers and tradespeople. Later Babylonia did the same thing to the southern kingdom, which included Jerusalem. Those northern kingdom farmers and tradespeople struggled to worship God as per the Law of Moses because all the priests and Levites were taken away to Assyria. They did the best they could but some of the prescribed rites and sacrifices they could not do without a priest, so their practice of Judaism changed a little. In addition, they started to intermarry with their overseers and the local pagan peoples. The area they were left to live in was commonly called Samaria. When the Jews held in captive were finally released from captivity after several generations, and returned to the northern and southern kingdoms, they resented those who stayed behind and kept their homes, farms, and businesses, no matter how they suffered to work to pay tribute to their overseers. The returning captives shunned their "brethren" that stayed and quickly grew to hate them, identifying them with Samaria and labeling them "Samaritans." From that day until well after Jesus, in Jewish culture, the Samaritans were despised ethnic group.

35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend."

Note, Jesus does not say that the Samaritan brought the man to his own house and took on a permanent burden of caring for this guy for the rest of his life. No, the Samaritan simply worked to restore the man to his former state of health, not even halting the Samaritan's own journey.

36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy."

The lawyer won't even say the name, "Samaritan"!

Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Youch!!!!!! Who is my neighbor? Absolutely anyone and everyone, even those people whom you interpret as sinning against God, your own nation, your own people, and yourself. Is there any acceptable excuse for walking past neighbors who are in need of help (note: the man beaten on the side of the road doesn't even ask for help!)? NONE!