

CHRIST CHURCH SMALL GROUPS

Lectionary Readings for the Weekend of July 7, 2024 – The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Year B



Instruction: Small Groups are encouraged to read each text and use the discussion questions for further conversation and growth.

The Collect

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The First Reading | Ezekiel 2:1-5

The Lord said to me: O mortal, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you. And when he spoke to me, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. He said to me, Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day. The descendants are impudent and stubborn. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, “Thus says the Lord God.” Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them.

The Psalm | Psalm 123

¹ To you I lift up my eyes, to you enthroned in the heavens.

² As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, and the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,

³ So our eyes look to the Lord our God, until he shows us his mercy.

⁴ Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy, for we have had more than enough of contempt,

⁵ Too much of the scorn of the indolent rich, and of the derision of the proud.

The Second Reading | 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

The Gospel | Mark 6:1-13

Jesus came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their

own house.” And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Discuss:

1. **The Collect:** Do you find yourself devoted to God with your whole heart? If not, what keeps you from going “all in?”
2. **The First Reading:** Certainly, God speaks to us today, just as he spoke through Ezekiel to the people of Israel in this reading. As listeners, we can choose to hear or we can refuse to listen. Where are you in your discipleship today? Are you choosing to hear what God is saying to you or are you refusing? How can we be better listeners of God?
3. **The Second Reading:** In this reading, we hear the famous words, “for power is made perfect in weakness.” How do you understand this phrase? Must we experience some form of suffering or weakness in order to have authority? Is this phrase encouraging us to live more humbly? How can we use our life experience (all of our weaknesses and strengths) in order to have a gospel-centered life that gives glory to God?
4. **The Gospel:** The mission of the early disciples is to cast out demons and anoint the sick. Do we modern disciples still fulfill this call? Jesus sends the disciples out two-by-two; they are never alone. Can you talk about someone in the faith who has walked with you on your journey? What was it like having another Christian as a deep friend or partner?

CHRIST CHURCH SMALL GROUPS

Lectionary Readings for the Weekend of July 14, 2024 – The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, Year B



Instruction: Small Groups are encouraged to read each text and use the discussion questions for further conversation and growth.

The Collect

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The First Reading | Amos 7:7-15

This is what the Lord God showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord said to me, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said, “See, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass them by; the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.” Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said, ‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.’” And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.” Then Amos answered Amaziah, “I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”

The Psalm | Psalm 85:8-13

- ⁸ I will listen to what the Lord God is saying,
for he is speaking peace to his faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to him.
- ⁹ Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
- ¹⁰ Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- ¹¹ Truth shall spring up from the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
- ¹² The Lord will indeed grant prosperity, and our land will yield its increase.
- ¹³ Righteousness shall go before him, and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.

The Second Reading | Ephesians 1:3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in

him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

The Gospel | Mark 6:14-29

King Herod heard of Jesus and his disciples, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Discuss:

1. **The Collect:** We pray for God to help us understand the things we ought to do. Is this easy for you—doing the things you ought to do? In your relationship with God, do you do the things you ought to do or do you find it challenging? What does God desire of us in relationship?
2. **The Psalm:** The psalmist describes a desire to listen to what God is saying. What has God been saying to you in your prayer life recently? Try to boil it down to one or two words (patience, joy, gratitude, etc.). "His salvation is very near to those who fear him." How do we fear God? What does this look like today?
3. **The Second Reading:** The first verse of the Letter to the Ephesians is all about blessing. What does it mean to be blessed by God? Is "blessed" a word that has lost its spiritual relevance in the 21st century (#blessed)? What are the spiritual blessings you are aware of in your life? What spiritual blessings do you ask God to bestow upon you?
4. **The Gospel:** Herod's wife motivates her husband, King Herod, to commit the political murder of John the Baptist because John criticized their marriage. It can be difficult to speak truth to power. Are people today, in our society, able to speak their mind and criticize those in power? Is the United States good at permitting spaces for such criticisms? Have you ever had to speak truth to power? Where was God in the midst of that moment?

CHRIST CHURCH SMALL GROUPS

Lectionary Readings for the Weekend of July 21, 2024 – The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, Year B



Instruction: Small Groups are encouraged to read each text and use the discussion questions for further conversation and growth.

The Collect

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The First Reading | Jeremiah 23:1-6

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord. The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

The Psalm | Psalm 23

- ¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.
- ² He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.
- ³ He revives my soul and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.
- ⁴ Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- ⁵ You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over.
- ⁶ Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

The Second Reading | Ephesians 2:11-22

Remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision"—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household

of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

The Gospel | Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Discuss:

1. **The Collect:** God “knows our necessities even before we ask.” If God knows what we need, why are we compelled to pray these things to God? Does God always give us what we need?
2. **The Psalm:** Psalm 23 is one of the most beloved of all psalms. Which verse is your favorite and why? How does God revive your soul? Do you find it easy to relate to Jesus as a shepherd?
3. **The Second Reading:** The author of Ephesians (traditionally thought to be Paul) makes a strong argument that the promises of God extend now to both Jews and Gentiles as covenant people of God. For long periods of time, Christians were hostile to Jews. How can we build better relationships with our Jewish brothers and sisters today?
4. **The Gospel:** Jesus is starting to draw a crowd. What do you think it is that draws people to Jesus? If Jesus was here in the flesh today, what would you ask of him? How would you treat him?