

A Follow Up Bible Study

Building on the Messages of the Lessons from the 13th Sunday after Pentecost

Warm Up

So that we can see what main line Christian pastors call the gospel and the kingdom of God, we have a video by Steve Thomason who describes himself as *a post-evangelical, missional, neo-Lutheran theologian, pastor, and artist*. He is the pastor of Easter Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Eagan, MN. **Let me warn you**, he is very gentle, talented and engaging. Put your discerning ears on. Ask: How does he define the gospel?

1. Sermon for August 30, 2020

Text: 1 Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

Theme: Live in Yahweh's compassion. Avoid misguided *compassion*.

Share your questions or comments regarding Sunday's sermon.

Share your questions or comments regarding Sunday's sermon **text**.

2. While we read this first verse, ask yourself, "What stands out?"

**¹ This is what the LORD says.
Protect justice, and carry out righteousness,
because my salvation is coming very soon.
My righteousness is ready to be revealed.**

How would your friend who is an unbeliever interpret this verse?

Hebrew poetry uses parallelism. The statement is restated using synonyms. Draw a line connecting the synonyms in these 2 lines and note how they complement/define each other.

because my salvation is coming very soon.

My righteousness is ready to be revealed.

How does *righteousness* in the last line inform the phrase *carry out righteousness*?

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The Hebrew word translated *because* (*for* in many other translations) in the 3rd line means the last 2 lines offer a reason to **protect justice and carry out righteousness**. Explain what that means.

The conjunction translated *because* can be translated *surely* or *indeed*. What does that mean?

3. Since Hebrew is a concrete language it works from the observable activity back to its source, pointing out the fruit, then reveals where it came from. If you don't know that you might get the impression that v. 6 is the prerequisite for God's work in vs. 7 & 8.

What is stated in vs. 1 and 6 to make it clear that verse 6 is speaking of fruits of faith?

Verse 8 also indicates that v. 6 speaks about fruits of faith. **Explain.**

4. Read this account from Acts 21

²⁷ When the seven days were almost over, Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, ²⁸ shouting, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law, and against this place. And now he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." ²⁹ (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.)

³⁰ The whole city was stirred up, and the people rushed together as a mob. They seized Paul, dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. ³¹ While they were looking for a way to kill him, a report went up to the commander of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³² He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. When they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

Consider their reaction to Isaiah 65:6-8. What would their reaction reveal about their religion?

Thinking about this, how can we prepare ourselves to welcome people from different cultures into our church in a way that we rejoice over the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy?

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Second Lesson: Romans 11:13-15, 28-32

5. **Read the Lesson.** Many times when I've read this text, after not reading it for some time, it seems like a bowl of spaghetti noodles, weaving in and out, hard to trace and follow. What's your impression upon a quick reading?

6. **Read v. 32: For God imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may show mercy to all.**

This is a stunning statement. It summarizes this section.

Discuss verse 32. What is it saying? Why was this necessary? What is God's purpose?

7. Paul wrote: ¹⁵ **For if their (my own people - the Jews) rejection meant the reconciliation of the world...** What does this refer to?

8. Paul wrote: ³⁰ **For just as you were once disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy due to their disobedience,**
³¹ **so also now they have become disobedient, so that by the mercy shown to you they may be shown mercy too.**

Unwind the spaghetti, one line at a time.

9. Paul wrote: ²⁸ **In regard to the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But, in regard to election, they are especially dear for the sake of the patriarchs,** ²⁹ **because God's gracious gifts and call are not regretted.**

Paul says the Jews were *enemies in regard to the gospel*. Whose enemies?

How are the Jews *enemies for your sake*?

Verses 28b-29 are so much clearer in the EHV than the NIV. Explain these verses.

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Anyone who seizes on the fact that Paul calls the Jews *enemies* as a reason to practice anti-Semitism needs to read the whole verse. What are they missing?

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 15:21-28

10. Matthew 15 starts off with Pharisees and experts in the Law coming all the way from Jerusalem to challenge Jesus about his failure to make his disciples follow the traditions on ceremonial hand washing before eating. Jesus turned the tables and asked them why they advocate disobedience to God's commandment to honor your father and mother. The leaders were offended by Jesus' answer. That might be why Jesus wanted to get away for a while.

²¹ Jesus left that place and withdrew into the region of Tyre and Sidon. Why was this a good place to go, especially to get away from the ceremonially clean police?

11. The confession of this unnamed Gentile (Canaanite) woman is stunning. **“Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!”** Whom did she confess Jesus to be?

12. Why didn't Jesus respond until the disciples came to him to send her away? What do you sense were the disciples' motives for urging Jesus to send her away?

13. Jesus calls her faith *great*. Great in what ways?

14. I once endured a discussion on this text with 3 other pastors serving in King of Prussia, where they took Jesus to task for racial insensitivity and gender bias by calling this Canaanite woman a *dog*. When I pointed out the often overlooked diminutive form of *dog* and that the woman didn't see it as an insult, they looked at me like, “Huffman doesn't get it. He is such a traditional Christian defending Jesus as if he was sinless.” Thank you, but...

I often find that those who accuse Christians of a *Western bias that misses the point of the text* are actually the ones who view the text from their *Western socially conscious bias*.