

**First United Methodist Church
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Lectionary Study Guide**

For use the week of October 17, 2021

21st Sunday After Pentecost

October 17, 2021

Opening Prayer

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit that, as the Scriptures are read and discussed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Job 38:1-7, (34-41)

^{38:1} Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind: ² "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? ³ Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. ⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measurements--surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶ On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone ⁷ when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

^{38:34} "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you? ³⁵ Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say to you, 'Here we are'? ³⁶ Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind? ³⁷ Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, ³⁸ when the dust runs into a mass and the clods cling together? ³⁹ "Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, ⁴⁰ when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their covert? ⁴¹ Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?

Commentary

In this series of rhetorical questions, God was reminding Job of what he seemed to have forgotten--that after all it was God, not he, who was in charge. God was the master of the universe. God was the creator and Job the creature. To question and rail against such truths would shroud the grandeur and mystery of God and God's design of the universe.

Reflection

God's questions reminded Job of the order of creation and his place in it. How does the illusion that we are in control of the universe and our place and destiny in it undermine our trust in God?

Hebrews 5:1-10

^{5:1} Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; ³ and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴ And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; ⁶ as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek." ⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹ and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰ having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Commentary

Hebrews 5 continues the theme in earlier chapters of the image of Christ as both of the people and of the priesthood- a mediator between God and humanity. Because God became human in Jesus, Christ can serve as high priest with sympathy, patience, and grace. He intimately understands human suffering because he has experienced it in its depths. As Jesus learned obedience through suffering, so do we.

Reflection

How does suffering lead us to become perfect?

Mark 10:35-45

^{10:35} James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." ³⁶ And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" ³⁷ And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" ³⁹ They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." ⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Commentary

To be honored, a follower of Jesus must be as a servant (10:43). Disciples are not to be like the world in which leaders “lord it over” underlings. They are not to torment or despise the least, nor can they debase the broken. They are not to expect to be served as great and mighty leaders, but instead must humbly serve.

Reflection

Where in your life do you feel called to follow the example of the suffering servant? What might it mean for you to drink Jesus’ cup and receive his baptism?

Responsive Reading

Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c

- ^{104:1} Bless the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
² wrapped in light as with a garment.
You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
³ **you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,**
you make the clouds your chariot,
you ride on the wings of the wind,
⁴ **you make the winds your messengers,**
fire and flame your ministers.
⁵ You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.
⁶ **You cover it with the deep as with a garment;**
the waters stood above the mountains.
⁷ At your rebuke they flee;
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.
⁸ They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys
to the place that you appointed for them.
⁹ **You set a boundary that they may not pass,**
so that they might not again cover the earth.
- ^{104:24} O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
- ^{104:35c} **Praise the LORD!**

Closing Prayer

Grant, O Lord, that what we have said with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and that what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.