

Bible Study for July 15, 2018

Readings: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Psalm 24; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

Theme: Building a home for God

Due to being on vacation, I have selected a bible study from the Episcopal Church's Digital Network. This week's study and questions was written by Daniel Woods of St. Andrew's Theological Seminary in Quezon City, the Philippines.

READ: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19

The books attributed to the prophet Samuel tell the history of the Israelites and explain God's law for Israel under the guidance of the prophets. In chapter 6 of 2 Samuel, King David, after uniting the tribes of Israel under his leadership, takes possession of the Ark of the Covenant, containing the Ten Commandments and the staff of Moses. In our reading, we witness a scene of celebration for this new era of unity for the Israelites with Jerusalem as their capital, and King David himself is seen giving thanks to God in praise and worship. The worship described is joyous and heartfelt, with music and dancing. One figure that stands out as resenting this joyous scene: the daughter of the former king, Saul.

Every act of worship to God should be joyous and heartfelt, regardless of our preferred style of churchmanship. Our Christian unity, expressed through our common prayer and worship, is worthy of celebration, and the central place of God in this unity is worthy of genuine thanksgiving. Sometimes there are those among us who place greater value upon the form of our worship than on the substance; sometimes a newcomer simply does not understand what all the fuss is about. Either might express resentment when the worship is not exactly how they would like it to be, or when the joyous scene of worship is something to which they cannot relate. It is therefore up to us to ensure that we focus on the substance of our worship rather than the form and to reach out to those who are struggling to relate to our worship in order to be truly pleasing to God.

Q: How do you feel during worship in your church?

Q: How can we ensure that God is always at the center of our worship?

Q: How would you explain our worship to a newcomer?

Prayer: Lord, help me today to worship you in all that I do so that others who see me will get to know you. Amen.

READ: Ephesians 1:3-14; Galatians 5:22-23

St. Paul's letter to the Christian community in Ephesus, a Greek city in modern-day Turkey, incorporates themes of church unity, purity, and holiness. In this section of his letter, Paul tells us of the blessings received from God through Jesus Christ—blessings which we were destined to receive from the beginning of time. He explains that out of love for God, we should strive to be holy and blameless. Although unworthy, we are forgiven our sins through faith in Jesus, setting us free to do better.

We know God's will for our lives through the example of Jesus' own life. As the creator of all things, God desires all things to be united with him through Jesus Christ, a legacy which we who have faith in him have also inherited. We should live with a desire for God to be praised by all. Through our faith in Jesus Christ, we are assured that the Holy Spirit will always enable and empower us in this task so that we might produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit by fulfilling our task of proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom.

Q: What are some feelings you have experienced when praise is being given to God?

Q: How are you personally fulfilling what Paul has?

Q: Which of the fruits of the Spirit do you struggle with?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you have asked me to share the Good News of God's kingdom with everyone. Send me your Spirit to help me today to do just that. Amen.

READ: Mark 6:14-29

This gospel is attributed to St. Mark the Evangelist, regarded as the founder of the Christian community in Alexandria. It was written for Greek-speaking Christian converts with a need to explain unfamiliar Jewish traditions and Aramaic terms. In this section we are told how the life of John the Baptist came to an end. At this point in the Scriptures, there is still confusion over who Jesus really was, and many, including King Herod, had become convinced that Jesus was the resurrected St. John.

The death of John was clearly troubling King Herod's conscience. Like Herod, are we often more afraid of the consequences from those around us than from Jesus, who will hold us accountable for all our actions at the end of time? Let us, therefore, have the courage to always attempt to do what is right in the eyes of God.

Q: Have you ever done something wrong out of the fear of disappointing someone?

Q: Are you more worried about the approval of others than the approval of God?

Q: If you could relive any of these situations again, what would you do differently?

Prayer: Blessed Lord Christ, have mercy on me today and give me all that I need to be the best that I can be so that the blessing of your name will be forever celebrated. Amen.

Slow read Psalm 24. Contemplate your own being as you picture yourself in the entire history of God's creative universe.

Prayer: O Lord, mercifully receive my prayers as I call upon you. Grant that I may know and understand what things I ought to do, and grant me the grace and power to faithfully accomplish them; through Jesus Christ my Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.