

Thoughts on the Readings of January 24, 2021

The Common Thread Belief requires repentance; true faith works repentance in the heart. Because God gives us our due, changing our evil ways may even cause God to turn from his wrath. As we trust in him, waiting for him to soften his anger, we begin to learn that he alone is our hope and salvation, that we cannot trust in self, anyone else, or anything. As we learn that he is our refuge and rock, anxieties begin to melt away ([Phil 4:6](#)). All of this depends upon believing in the gospel, and the repentance that comes through a knowledge of God's grace toward us.

First Reading - [Jonah 3:1-5, 10](#) The Small Catechism teaches us to pray the Lord's Prayer every morning and every evening, as we rise and retire. If not at those times, we pray his prayer on Sunday mornings. If we serve on a church committee, we probably close the meeting with that prayer. "How often we pray, "Thy will be done"! Yet, the Lord must make multiple efforts to get through to us. "Arise, go..." he says to Jonah and to us on more than one or two occasions. We keep praying for his will to be done. Will we respond to our own prayers?

Psalm - [Psalm 62:1-12](#) God speaks once, though we may have to hear what he says multiple times before we trust in his word to us. We may trust his word the first time because "power belongs to the Lord." God is our salvation because he has determined to save us and has the power to accomplish his will. We may therefore, act with confidence on his word to us.

Second Reading - [1 Corinthians 7:29-31, 32-35](#) Oh, to be free from anxieties! It would seem that freedom from worries begins with listening to the Lord. If one listens to the world's many voices, other cares will begin to creep in to the day to day life. This world is in the process of disappearing altogether. Why would one be anxious about what is here today but gone tomorrow? So, Paul counsels divorce from worldly concerns so that the Lord will be given undivided attention.

Gospel - [Mark 1:14-20](#) Listening to God and giving him our undivided attention is a simpler matter when one truly believes that his kingdom is at hand. If running a business or even working for someone else's business is more important than the kingdom of God, our priorities are misplaced. The time is at hand for Christ's followers to expend more concern for the kingdom of heaven than for personal kingdoms—their own or another—on earth.