

The Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Lectionary 29 + Year C

October 16, 2022

Pray always. Do not lose heart. This is Christ's encouragement in the gospel today. Wrestle with the word. Remember your baptism again and again. Come regularly to Christ's table. Persistence in our every encounter with the divine will be blessed.

The Church Year & The Gospel

- Sundays After Pentecost; “the half-year of the Church”
- Year C, Luke's Gospel.
 - Lucan themes, continued from prior weeks
 - The social/political context of the community from which Luke's Gospel arises: “in the days of King Herod of Judea...” “Emporer Augustus” “Quirinius was governor of Syria”
 - The Kings Herod were awful, abusive, concerned only with keeping their own power
 - Augustus and Quirinius... are these Hebrew names? Rome looms large in the lives of these Judeans.
 - Luke 4, the “thesis statement”
 - *When [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.’ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’*
 - Jesus' ministry is concerned with economics (and resources such as food), societal power imbalances (including gender), healing & restoration; in sum, making relationships *right*.
 - Luke is the only synoptic Gospel to use the term “savior” to describe Jesus. Hebrew linguistic precursors to the greek word σωτηρ “soter” include “widening”, “amplifying”, “liberating”, “redeeming” (return to proper ownership). These Hebrew words almost never refer to a concept of afterlife. The main interpretative story for the Hebrew linguistic understanding of God's saving action is the Exodus, that is, saving from the yoke of Egypt. God's salvation is about deliverance from bondage and oppression in *this life*.
- How does today's pericope connect with the larger Lucan goals/themes?
- What is God up to in this story?

Genesis

- What imagery do you notice in this story? What's going on?
- Who is Jacob?
 - Abraham + Sarah → Isaac // Isaac + Rebekah → Jacob and Esau (brothers).
 - Jacob is the younger brother who stays closer to home. Esau is a good hunter, and is at a odds with Jacob. At pine point, Jacob convinces Esau (amidst a famished compromise) to sell his inheritance to him for a bowl of soup. Years later, Jacob ends up tricking their father, Isaac, into giving him the family inheritance to “seal the deal”. Esau then tries to kill Jacob, who flees to his uncle Laban. Jacob ends up courting Laban's daughter. Things get a bit twisted, and Jacob's firstborn, Joseph, gets sold into Egyptian slavery (another story for another day!).
 - As Esau marches toward Jacob with an army of troops, Jacob flees with his family. It is in the context of this escape that Jacob has the wrestling encounter with the “angel”.
 - Jacob is renamed Israel. The name Israel means “wrestles with God.”
- What does this have to say about living as God's people?

Psalm

- What do you notice here? How does the psalm reflect on the first reading?

2 Timothy

- This is characterized as one of the New Testament “Pastoral Letters”. Did Paul actually write these words? (Does that matter?)
 - 19th/20th century scholarship generally regards letters such as Second Timothy to be products of an emerging catholicity/orthodoxy among the Christian movement in the mid second century. We may remember that there was a rather vast diversity of Christian community in the first two centuries of the Common Era, with many differing worship practices, eschatological expectations, and understandings of Scripture. Any reference to “the early Christian Church” should keep this diversity in mind! There was not just one way of doing things. Second Timothy seems to point us towards some common theological understandings that may have united disparate Christian groups.
- How is today's pericope used in Christian community? How does it function? What emotions does it draw forth?

Final Questions

- Reflect on the lyrics of the Hymn of the Day and how it brings forth themes from the scriptures of this season.
- Which part of the ordo (Gathering/Word/Meal/Sending) do these texts most deeply connect to? Why?
- What's the Good News?