

Bible Study Lesson Summary, June 24, 2018

This Sunday, June 24th, your readings should be Day 232: Chapter 10 of the 1st Book of Maccabees, Song of Songs Chapter 4, and Chapter 9: 27-45 of the Gospel of St. Luke.

There is no class the next two weeks. The next class will be on July 15th, so you have three weeks to read up to Day 239.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE

Lk. 6: This starts with battles with the Pharisees on two Sabbaths. The first ends with vs. 5: “Then he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.” The second one ends with vs. 11: “But they became enraged and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.

In vs. 12-16 he named his twelve apostles. It is like a father with 12 sons, think Jacob.

In vs. 17-49 is an extended teaching with many lessons. Notice that he is not on a mountain, which would be a spot like God giving commandments to Moses. In vs. 20 it says: “And raising his eyes toward his disciples...” From this perspective they have to look at each other while listening to him. In the people around them and the ones they are looking at they will see the poor, the hungry, the weeping, and those who are usually excluded or insulted. They will also see the rich, the hungry, the laughers, and the well treated. So once he has their attention he tells them they must love each other, even their enemies. They can’t be judgmental. He ends it with a threat that it isn’t good enough to just say Lord, Lord. They have to do what he commands, for that will shore up their faith or connection with Him.

Lk. 7: This chapter starts with the healing of the Centurion’s Slave. That is a double negative for the Jews, a real test of what Jesus just taught. This is one of the reasons it is important to have these lessons beyond Sunday readings. You see the connection between the stories. Vs. 6 should sound familiar: “I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof.” It is from Communion. Vs. 11-17 are a powerful story of raising the dead, but it is also a story that shows empathy for Mary, who will have her son rise.

Vs. 18-23 shows that John the Baptist still wanted to make sure he was on the right track. We all have those moments of insecurity. Even though John had been insecure, Jesus praises him in vs. 24-36. Vs. 36-50 have another story that represents us. A sinful woman (may or may not be Mary Magdalene) who seeks forgiveness. Jesus uses the situation to teach about the gift of forgiveness from God. Vs. 49 brings up the big question: “Who is this who even forgives sins?” For the Jews believe only God can do that.

Lk. 8: The chapter starts by naming some women who were followers and provided for Jesus and the apostles. This is significant. This is a total upgrade for women’s dignity. It was Christianity that actually made the biggest impact on women’s rights. No other culture or faith did that, except the Amazons, who are fictitious.

Vs. 4-18 are different parables explaining the Kingdom of God.

In vs. 19-21 he redefines family to include us. That is good news for a Kingdom for then we are going to be royalty. In vs. 22-25 he shows power over nature. In vs. 26-39 he shows power over demons. Those are important to who he is. Vs. 40-56 are important to who we are in relationship to him. It is about having faith in him.

Lk. 9:1-26: He starts this with giving the Twelve some pastoral experience. While they are gone there is a version of ‘who do they say I am,’ only it is with Herod. This is a special kind of sandwich, fish taco. The Herod story of the first piece of bread. Then the Twelve come back and report and they have the multiplication of the loaves and fish, fish tacos. The one who’s authority is in question is giving in abundance. That was the meat of the story. Then in vs. 18 He asks the disciples who he is. Peter gets it right but they are not to spread the news that He is the Messiah of God. That is the second piece of bread. Jesus is the Messiah who provides abundantly, but what does He provide? Just fish tacos?
In vs. 22-27 he gives the bad news of what is going to happen to Him and that His followers will face similar crosses.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecc. 9: Vs. 3, “Among all the things that happen under the sun, this is the worst, that things turn out the same for all.” Vs. 5, for “the dead no longer know anything. There is no further recompense for them...” Realize what life would have been like for the author without hope in some kind of justice from God or an after-life that separates the good and the bad.

Ecc. 10-12: It is obvious that the author is looking for answers but finds none. After looking at more depressing things he concludes in vs. 13-14: “The last word, when all is heard: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man’s all; because God will bring to judgment every work, with all its hidden qualities, whether good or bad.”

Now maybe we can understand why it was so hard for the Chosen People to remain faithful to God. They didn’t have the motivation that resurrection gives.

THE SONG OF SONGS

This beautiful book is about love: between God and the Chosen People, between God and the Church, between God and each individual, between God and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The notes in my Bible say the Song of Songs means the greatest of songs.

Sng. 1: This starts out with images of how God sees us. Vs. 15, “Ah, you are beautiful, my beloved, ah, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves!” As you read it realize that it goes back and forth in perspectives. Sometimes the bride is the perspective and sometimes it is the groom.

Sng. 2-3: These seem to be from the perspective of the bride seeing the groom. This can be like reading into the minds of people in a fairy-tale like, Cinderella.

THE FIRST BOOK OF MACCABEES

We have just finished three novelettes. They are stories that can't seem to be tracked in history. Because of their content their might be a couple reasons for this. One is story-tellers embellish to make points that tell the real story even those they are lose with the facts. Nobody wants their nation to remember the beheading of their main general. Another is that historians tend to erase the memory of things they don't want to have people remember. With personal stories like these that means there might not be any corroborating outside evidence. The mixture of times and mistakes in the context of the story may also mean that the author was purposefully trying to make the story timeless. But the Books of Maccabees are different. They can be placed in history. We have lots of other material to verify the truth of the setting of these stories. So even though there might not be anything on the Maccabee family from outside sources it is very likely that they were real.

These two books are not in Protestant Bibles, because they were not in the Palestinian Canon, but were in the exiled Jewish Canon that was around areas of Greece and Turkey. They are very important to the story of the New Testament. They bring out the idea of Purgatory, which seems to have been starting to develop at this time of less than 200 year B.C.

1Mc. 1: It is about 169 B.C. and the Israelites have been back in their land for about 3 centuries. All has not gone well. They have been conquered several times. Now the Jews are making an alliance with the Gentiles, which will basically make their following of the Law of Moses extinct. Vs. 15, "They covered over the mark of their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant; they allied themselves with the Gentiles and sold themselves to wrongdoing." Antiochus, a Greek king, misleads the Jews into trusting him. In vs. 30-31, he won their trust but then destroyed Jerusalem and built a new version of it. In vs. 43, "and many Israelites were in favor of his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath." Anyone who didn't was killed.

1Mc. 2: Mattathias and his sons fought back. Soldiers were sent to kill them. They attacked one group on the Sabbath. Because of God's law they would not fight back on the Sabbath so they all died. So Mattathias and his friends heard about it and came to a decision: "Let us fight against anyone who attacks us on the Sabbath, so that we may not all die as our kinsmen died in the hiding places." (vs. 41) This is very significant for it sets up the Churches understanding that they can make another alteration, to change the Sabbath or the Lord's Day to Sunday. Mattathias died of old age and the boys take over.

1Mc. 3: One son, Judas Maccabeus, became the leader and had some victories.

1Mc. 4: Judas wins more battles and purifies the sanctuary on Zion and rededicates it, finds good priests and in vs. 56 celebrates the feast of Hanukkah for the first time.

1Mc. 5: The rededication angers the Gentiles, who attack but are defeated. But two Jewish "hero wanna-be's", Joseph and Azariah said: "Let us also make a name for ourselves by going out and fighting against the Gentiles around us." They were beaten and vs. 64 explains their defeat; "But they did not belong to the family of those men to whom it was granted to achieve Israel' salvation." This would be like a person taking on the devil without invoking Christ the savior. They will lose.

1Mc. 6: King Antiochus is defeated and become terrified of God right before death. At his death his son Antiochus V takes over and is angry with Judas and puts together an attack force with drunken elephants. No clear victor comes out of the battle, but peace is declared.

1Mc. 7: Nicanor leads an army against Judas and even with deceit and trickery loses the battle.

1Mc. 8: Judas made a treaty with the Romans.

1Mc. 9: Judas dies in battle. This was bound to happen after his dealings with the Gentiles. Jonathan, his brother is chosen as the successor. He avenges his brother at a wedding and wins a battle. Vs. 73: “Then the sword ceased in Israel. Jonathan settled in Michmash; he began to judge the people, and he destroyed the impious in Israel.”