Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 11-30-2014



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for 11-30-2014. This week we open with the first reading from Isaiah 63 in which we include a great deal of the surrounding context and learn about God's frustration with the Jewish people during this era. Then we move to the second reading which is the opening verses of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. Finally we conclude with a lengthy analysis from Mark's Gospel on the section known as the Olivet Discourse.

The first reading is in Isaiah 63-64. Israel was experiencing the consequences of turning away from God. Isaiah, who was God's spokesperson, cried out to God on behalf of the people. The people were suffering as a result of keeping God out of their lives. But this was a necessary part of the training process, for how else would they know that surrendering to God was actually for their good unless they experienced the harsh reality of living apart from God? (The bold text is what will be read in the mass, the normal text is the biblical verses that provide the context).

> *16 For You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us And Israel does not recognize us.* ***You, O LORD, are our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Your name. 17 Why, O LORD, do You cause us to stray from Your ways And harden our heart from fearing You? Return for the sake of Your servants, the tribes of Your heritage. 18 Your holy people possessed Your sanctuary for a little while, Our adversaries have trodden it down.*** *19 We have become like those over whom You have never ruled, Like those who were not called by Your name. (Isaiah 63:16-19)*

As a prophet, Isaiah was in a tough position. He desired to see God move in the hearts of the people,

but he knew that the Israelites were unwilling. God is a "gentleman" and does not barge in where He is not wanted. And so the people's hearts grew harder and harder, to the point where God's protective presence was no longer felt in Israel. Isaiah's complaint was that they had become just like the surrounding nations that did not have a covenantal relationship with God. He said, "We have become like those over whom You have never ruled, Like those who were not called by Your name" (v. 19). Again, the reading continues below.

> ***1 Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down, That the mountains might quake at Your presence– 2 As fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil–To make Your name known to Your adversaries, That the nations may tremble at Your presence! 3 When You did awesome things which we did not expect, You came down, the mountains quaked at Your presence. 4 For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, Nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him. 5 You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness, Who remembers You in Your ways. Behold, You were angry, for we sinned, We continued in them a long time; And shall we be saved? 6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. 7 There is no one who calls on Your name, Who arouses himself to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities. 8 But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand.*** *(Isaiah 63:16 – 64:8)*

Isaiah's response to their predicament was to call God to hurl down His judgment upon the nations that were attacking them (vv. 1-3). He looked back and remembered God's power when He did "awesome things [they] did not expect" (v. 3) and finally admitted their great sin. Isaiah said, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (v. 6). The connotation of the "filthy garments" here is that of a woman's menstrual rags. This is a strong word picture of how God views our "good deeds" done in our own power. This theme is echoed in the words of King David who said in Psalm 14, "They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one" (Psalm 14:3). Seven hundred years later Saint Paul quoted these verses to explain how every person stands condemned before God because of the stain of sin. He said, "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). He further explained that as result of our sin the penalty is death (Romans 6:23). This passage teaches that we cannot save ourselves. There is no such thing as a cosmic scale that weighs our good deeds versus our bad deeds. All of our deeds, even the so-called "good deeds" are as filthy garments, good only for the trash heap. If this is the case, we must analyze what we are trusting in for salvation. If we are trusting in ourselves, we are going to be sorely lacking.

Isaiah points to a redemptive solution in this passage by showing the need of trusting in God's righteousness. He described God's character: "Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him. You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness, who remembers You in Your ways" (vv. 4-5). There is an implied sense of relational dependence to which Isaiah is pointing. He continues this theme of relational dependence at the end of the section saying: "But now, O LORD, You are our Father, we are the clay, and You are our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand" (v. 8). The redemptive solution to the dire situation we find ourselves in as sinners is to throw ourselves on God's mercy and to trust in Him to save us. In the New Testament, we see even more clearly God's redemption in Jesus. He bore the wrath of God and forgives us of our sin and cleanses us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). As believers in the finished work of Jesus we are forgiven of our sin and have a special relationship with God, Who at the moment we believed sent His Holy Spirit to live within us (Ephesians 1:13).

What does this means for us today? We must consider carefully in what/whom we are trusting for salvation. Isaiah is very clear, that we cannot be good enough to be saved on our own merit. Becoming a Christian means to lean your full weight on Jesus and trust His righteousness to save you. As believers we have a special relationship with God, in a way that is similar but yet unique from God's chosen people Israel. There will be untold blessings for all believers when they pass into eternity with God the moment they die. Saint Paul quoted from the first reading and said about believers in the Lord Jesus, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). God allowed judgment to come upon the people of Israel for the purpose of bringing them back to the Lord. As we transition to the second reading, which is also from 1 Corinthians, Paul celebrates with the believers in that region the forgiveness they received through Jesus Who "died for their sins according the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). We can celebrate that we have come to believe even without having to endure a military invasion and being carried captive into a foreign land as happened with the Jews. Although the Jewish people about whom Isaiah wrote in the reading had turned away from the Lord, one day all of Israel will repent of their sin and be saved (Romans 11:26).

The second reading is the first six verses from Saint Paul's Letter to the Corinthians. Paul founded this church on his second missionary journey as recorded in Acts 18. The Corinthian church was in a major cosmopolitan city in southern Greece, immersed in the surrounding godless culture of a worldly crossroads city. This was actually Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he mentioned the first letter in 1 Corinthians 5:9 that was subsequently lost.

> *1 Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to*

> *the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)*

Paul began by affirming his apostleship, meaning that he was someone who saw the resurrected Lord Jesus and was personally called by the Lord to his ministry. This happened to him while he journeyed on the road to Damascus as was recorded in the Book of Acts (Acts 9:3-5). Second, Paul provided the name of Sosthenes who was most likely his secretary. This man had suffered for the Lord when he was beaten for taking Paul in front of a Corinthian civil court (Acts 18:12-17). The mention of Sosthenes is significant because it reveals that this important Jewish leader of the synagogue in that region (Acts 18:17) came to faith in the Lord Jesus. Third, Paul affirmed the holiness of anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus. He said, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours (v. 2). Sanctification is the concept of being set apart for the purposes of God. This word comes from the Greek "hagios" meaning "separation," and is the same Greek word that is translated "holiness."

This is a one-time, forever event, but also has an ongoing, growing element, in that as the author of Hebrews stated, "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Finally, Paul says that in the end, believers in the Lord will be "blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 8). This is a common theme for Paul, we also see it in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 as well as in Philippians 1:6 and 2:15. Paul said in Colossians, "yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach–if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister" (Colossians 1:22-23). Believers are blameless in their positon before the Lord, meaning they are justified as if they had never sinned. However, the ungodly behavior that Paul noted later in 1 Corinthians was not indicative of true believers, for only true believers are blameless before the Lord. Paul said in the closing verse of the reading, "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 9). Although as we saw in the first reading, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), continuing in the faith is a sign of a true believer.

We can celebrate that as believers we have been set apart from the world for the purpose of serving God. Most of us do not get too excited about holiness, because holiness has the connation of being no fun. But that is the deception of the Enemy who makes us think that holiness is a drag. The idea of holiness is to be set apart for special use, and which one of us doesn't want to be "special". That is a longing that everyone has. We see a world full of people trying to be special based on the world's value system, using their looks, their personality, their wit, their charm, their money, and their talents to try to stand out from the rest of the crowd. Wanting to feel special is a legitimate longing, but unless it's met in Christ, we will try to meet it in some illegitimate way, which is sinful (even if it is not immoral). So the moral of the story is to recognize that God's imparted holiness to us is what meets this deep longing to be set apart for special use.

Something Paul said in the second reading provides an entry point to transition to the Gospel lesson. Paul said that the Corinthian believers were "awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:7). In the Gospel lesson from Mark Chapter 13, Jesus provides some important insight into just how that event will come about. This reading is from the portion of Scripture known as the Olivet Discourse because Jesus told it while on the Mount of Olives just across the Kidron Valley from the Jerusalem temple. In this passage, the Lord predicts the future destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and looks far beyond to the time when God will pour out His judgment upon the world just before He returns to usher in His Millennial reign. *Note: In order to provide the full context the entire first portion of the chapter that was skipped in the lectionary was included since it was so important in order to understand the entire context and the meaning that flows from it.*

> *1 As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" 2 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down." 3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?" 5 And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 6 Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He!' and will mislead many. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. 8 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. 9 But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. 10 The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11 When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. 12 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. 13 You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14 But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 15 the one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; 16 and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. 17 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 But pray that it may not happen in the winter. 19 For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. 20 Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. 21 And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him; 22 for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. 23 But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance. 24 But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS*

> *LIGHT, 25 AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. 27 And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven. 28 Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. 30 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. 32 But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 33 Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. 34 It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. 35 Therefore, be on the alert–for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning– 36 in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'" (Mark 13:1-37)*

In order to understand the meaning of Jesus' message we must provide a brief overall grid of the end time (eschatological) events. First, although this prophecy was partially fulfilled with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70, the final fulfillment will be in the future when the Old Testament prophecies regarding the "Day of the Lord" will be poured out upon the unbelieving world. During this time, the events of the end times will be marked with signs on earth, signs in the sky, and signs in heaven. It is important to understand that some events run in parallel throughout our current age up until the return of the Lord; other events run sequentially, such as those that play out during the tribulation period.

Parallel Events: Some of the events that run in parallel are as follows.

- The persecution of believers (verse 9)
- The overall decline of morality and godly living (2 Timothy 3:13). Both of these conditions will grow worse and the persecution of believers will intensify until the close of this age and the return of the Lord Jesus.
- An overall increase in natural and manmade disasters. Beginning in verse 6 Jesus moved to an overall description of the age preceding his return. This period was to marked by "wars and rumors of wars" (v. 6), earthquakes and famines (v. 8), world wars (v. 8) and by many false Messiahs (christs, v. 6) coming and saying that they are the Christ. Jesus said that the Gospel must first go out to the entire world (v. 10), which we see will be fulfilled by an angel in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 14:6), in spite of the best efforts of Christian missionaries to achieve this goal.
- The coming of many antichrists (v. 22). Many antichrists have arisen in our age including figures like David Koresh, Joseph Smith (Mormons), and Charles Taze Russell (JW's). An interesting one is the case of a man named Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. This rabbi from New York was a very influential Jewish leader in the world. When he died in 1994 his

followers expected him to rise from the dead in you guessed it, three days. As of this writing, he is still in the grave.

Sequential Events: Other events follow sequentially, some of which are as follows.

- Jesus' prediction in verses 1-3 of the destruction of the temple, which was fulfilled in AD 70.
- A future "catching up" to meet Jesus in the air, first of the believers that have already died, then those living of the church to heaven as predicted by Saint Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

  "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

  Once the church is removed from the world because "God has not appointed us to wrath" (1 Thessalonians 5:9) the cascading series of events known as the tribulation period will commence. The last half of the closing chapter of the tribulation period is known as the "Day of the Lord," and this is the emergency scenario that begins when Jesus warns the people in verse 15.

- Signs in the sky (vv. 24-25).
- The coming of the ultimate Antichrist spoken of by the Prophet Daniel and in the Book of Revelation. Saint John said in his day that many antichrists had already come (1 John 2:18), but the Bible predicts the coming of one known as the Man of Sin (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This is the one that will bring about the "abomination of desolation" described by Jesus in verse 14. This will mark the establishment of a global ruler known as the Antichrist (1 John 2:18, Daniel 7:8 "the little horn," Revelation 6:2 –the rider on the white horse), and the false holy spirit figure known as the false prophet (Revelation 13:11-15).
- The unveiling of God's judgments described in the Book of Revelation including the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls (Revelation 6, 8, 11, 15, 16). These are judgments of God as declared in Revelation: "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve. … Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments" (Revelation 16:5-7).
- The unveiling of a powerful missionary force from God known as the "144,000 thousand witnesses" (Revelation 7:4).
- Supernatural protection of the Nation of Israel in a special place prepared by God (Revelation 12:6). This is the place to which Jesus is telling the people to flee in verse 14 when they see the Abomination of Desolation (refer to the next point below).
- The "abomination of desolation" (v. 14). This is when the Antichrist figure will establish himself as God and set up his own image in the temple to be worshiped. Paul said this about the Antichrist: "who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship,

so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2Thessalonians 2:4). The Jews were familiar with something like this happening before when Antiochus IV Epiphanes sacked the temple and rededicated it to the god Zeus in 167 BC, and sacrificed a pig in the temple to his god. This "abomination of desolation" was a type of the one to come, a prefiguring of the time that the Antichrist would establish himself as god in the temple to be worshiped by everyone in the world, not just Jerusalem as happened in the earlier time.

- The destruction of the Antichrist's religious and civil empire known as "Mystery Babylon" (Revelation 18:2).
- Marriage Supper of the Lamb with all believers in heaven (Revelation 19:7)
- Return of the Lord Jesus to earth with his victorious church (Revelation 19:11-19).
- Antichrist and False Prophet thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20)
- Satan bound for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:3) then released for a final battle (Revelation 20:7)
- Satan thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10).

What does all of this mean for us today? First, Jesus cautioned His disciples to be aware of their future destiny so that they were living rightly today. By using the parable of the fig tree (v. 28), something with which the people in the Mediterranean region were very familiar, they could see the signs of the times and live in a watchful and purposeful way. In the same way that Jesus cautioned His disciples to beware of by watching for the signs, we can know that Jesus' return in imminent by watching the signs ourselves. This means that we should not delay in accomplishing the work that God has placed in our hearts to accomplish. For, "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Second, because God's prophets so accurately predicted events that have already occurred, including Jesus' (the greatest prophet of all) prediction of the destruction of the temple, we can trust that the events will play out exactly as God as described in the Scriptures. Because God has so accurately predicted the future, we can trust Him when He tells us how to enter into an eternal relationship with Him through faith in His Son, the risen the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, we can rest in the fact that everything is going to turn out fine for anyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus for salvation. Those with faith in the Lord can trust that even if they find themselves thrown into tribulation, be it the "Great Tribulation" or any tribulation, they can trust that no matter what happens it will turn out well.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. How does knowing how the Grand Story ends influence how you live today? What values do you have as a result of knowing that God wins in the end? What values do you want God to develop in you based on this knowledge of the end times?

2. The first two readings dealt with humankind's lack of righteousness (Isaiah) and the Corinthian's being called saints. Think about this contrast that is spoken about throughout the Bible. The worse the bad news is, the better the good news is. Explain why the coming of Christ to die on the cross for our sins is called "the good news." How has this become good news for your life?

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Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/113014.cfm

First Reading IS 63:16B-17, 19B; 64:2-7

Second Reading 1 COR 1:3-9

Gospel Reading MK 13:33-37

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 11-23-2014



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for 11-23-2014. This week we open with the first reading from Ezekiel in which we see the contrast between the ungodly shepherds and God the Good Shepherd. We include a great deal of the surrounding verses in order to help us to understand the meaning of the reading based upon its context. Then we move onto the second reading from 1

Corinthians in which we study the truth of the resurrection of believers and how this provides us with great hope. Finally, we conclude with the Gospel lesson from Matthew 25 in which we study the coming judgment of everyone who lives in the world at the end of the tribulation period. We pray that this study gives you much more insight as you attend Mass this coming Sunday.

The first reading is from the Prophet Ezekiel. The context is just after God told Ezekiel that although the people recognized him as a prophet and came to listen to him (Ezekiel 33:30-31c) they did not take his words into account and change their lives (Ezekiel 33:31d-ff). Instead, God told them that it would be afterwards that they would look back and "know that a prophet has been among them" (v. 33). In Ezekiel's time, and also in the present age God is not pleased with people going through the motions of dead religion, especially when they don't listen to God's word and let Him operate on their hearts and minds to change their behavior. Chapter 34, the section from which today's reading is taken, opens with God's scathing critique of the "shepherds of Israel," meaning the ungodly leaders of the nation including kings, priests, and prophets (except for Ezekiel, Daniel and Jeremiah his contemporaries). We get our word "pastor" from the Latin word for "shepherd." These passages are messianic, meaning that they prefigure the revelation of the True Shepherd Jesus Christ. In those days the people were as "sheep without a shepherd," something eerily reminiscent of what Jesus said some six hundred years later. "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36-37). As usual in these study notes it is crucially important to understand the context as the reading provides a **contrast** between the ungodly "shepherds" of Ezekiel's time and the Godly Shepherd God and His ultimate fulfillment in the Person of Jesus Christ. This contrast is important enough to understand that we have provided the first ten verses of the chapter leading up to today's reading.

> *1 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. 4 Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. 5 They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. 6 My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them.' 7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 8 'As I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock;' 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 10 Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from*

> *feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.'"(Ezekiel 34:1-10)*

This is the text of the reading for today that follows the opening of chapter 34. *Note: Verses 13-14 which were skipped in the reading were added in order to provide the full context.*

> 11 For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. 12 "As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. 13 I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. 14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord GOD. 16 "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment. 17 As for you, My flock, thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats." (Ezekiel 34:11-17).

Throughout the Scripture, the Lord God pictures Himself as the "Shepherd of the Sheep," and this occurs early in the Bible. This theme in the reading from Ezekiel occurs frequently in Ezekiel's Book, occurring some 15 times in chapter 34 alone. The first time this concept appears is back in the Book of Genesis when Jacob was prophesizing about the twelve sons (and tribes) of Israel, this time about Joseph. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a spring; Its branches run over a wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, And shot at him and harassed him; But his bow remained firm, And his arms were agile, From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel)" (Genesis 49:22-24). The shepherd theme is reminiscent of the opening of Psalm 23, "The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want" v. 1). We see this clearly in today's reading. "I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord God" (vv. 14-16). As we examine today's reading we find additional insight into the identity of this Shepherd of Israel. He emerges as a Shepherd-King figure Who has a special relationship with the LORD. This is none other than the Lord Jesus Himself. If we look beyond today's reading to verse 34, we see a continuation of this contrast between the evil shepherds and the One True Shepherd. "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd" (Ezekiel 34:23). "David" in this verse prefigures the One True Shepherd that was yet to come at the time Ezekiel wrote this passage, the Person of Jesus Christ. It is also evident throughout Scripture that the resurrected King David will also play a role in governing Israel in the future Millennial reign of the Lord Jesus on earth.

As believers in Jesus, we can find great comfort from Ezekiel's writing. First, God will seek His sheep that are lost, meaning that God Himself places a calling upon our lives to come to faith in His Son Jesus Christ (v. 11). Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:44). Second, since God keeps His promises that He made to Israel, He will keep all of the promises that He has made to us. One of those promises made to Israel is that He will re-gather this nation Israel at some future time. "I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land" (v. 13a). Third, we can trust that God will take care of us in the same way that a Good Shepherd takes care of His sheep. Finally, although we may feel judged by worldly people in this age, the only real judgment that counts is our True Judge the Lord Jesus Himself (v. 17). We can trust that God's judgment will be correct in that as we enter eternity He will judge between the evil shepherds in our land and the ones that do good in serving Him.

As we move onto the second reading, we will see more about the Person Jesus Christ, since He was made alive at the resurrection, we too will be made alive when our bodies are resurrected from the dead. The reading is from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. The context is Paul's vigorous explanation of the bodily resurrection of believers, first the Lord Jesus and then all people who put their faith in Him. Paul opens this section with a caution to his readers for them to "hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:2b,c). The main theme that runs throughout the chapter is that the risen Lord Jesus is the hope of all believers, in spite of the fact that some in the church had denied the teaching of the future resurrection of the dead (v.12). Paul said, "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain" (1Corinthians 15:13-14). He closes the section just before today's reading by saying, "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1Corinthians 15:19), something which denies the conventional wisdom of our age that would say that the Christian life is a noble way of living. With these concepts in mind let's move onto today's reading. *Note: Verse 27 which was skipped in the reading was provided in order to provide the full context.*

> *20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, 24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. 27 For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. 28 When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)*

Paul said that since Christ **has** been raised from the dead, is the first One to be resurrected (v.20), He is the one through Whom came life and is a precursor of the hope of resurrection for all who

believe (v. 22b, 23). As we saw in the first reading from Ezekiel, Jesus' rulership will be established on earth, which is one of the aspects of the resurrection. Jesus will "come in glory," (Matthew 25:31) something that we will read about in the Gospel lesson today. Paul quoted from Psalm 8 when he said that Jesus would totally subdue all of His enemies, "put them under His feet" (vv. 25-26). The evil shepherds spoken of by Ezekiel will be subdued and judged forever. The greatest enemy that Jesus will conquer is death through the victory of the resurrection, first Himself and then all believers. The culmination of world history will be marked by the end of Jesus' one thousand year (millennial) reign on earth. This will be concluded with Christ handing over His kingdom to His Father in heaven (vv.24 -28), something that would fall into the category of what Saint Peter called "things that are hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16). After Christ has handed His kingdom over to the Father, His eternal reign will begin (Revelation 21, 22).

As believers, our greatest hope lies in the hope of resurrection. We can rest in the historical fact that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead, something that is one of the best proven historical events throughout all of history. As our bodies wear out and grow old, we can rest in the fact that one day we will be given a new eternal body that will never grow old. In the same way that Paul comforted the Corinthian believers with these facts, we can find comfort and give comfort to other believers through hope in our future resurrection.

As we transition to the Gospel lesson, earlier we mentioned in the first reading how God is the Righteous Judge and in the second reading how one day He will come in Glory to rule and reign over the earth. One of the elements of rulership is acting as a Judge, and at the end His reign on earth Jesus will judge those who have survived the tribulation period at the conclusion of the Day of the Lord. This is the judgment that is marked by Jesus' statement earlier in Matthew 24, "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left" (Matthew 24:40). The one that is taken will be taken in judgment, the one that is left behind will enter the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ. This is similar to what happened to the nonbelievers during Noah's flood. Jesus said, "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be(Matthew 24:37-39). As you read the Gospel lesson from Matthew 25, keep in mind the context that this judgment is immediately preceding Jesus' Millennial Reign on earth, rather than the Great White Throne judgment spoken of in Revelation 20:11-15 which doesn't happen until **after** Jesus' thousand year reign on earth. This judgment is the "reaping" spoken of by John in the Book of Revelation Chapter 14. "And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.' Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped" (Revelation 14:15-16).

> *31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His*

> *right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' 41 Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' 44 Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' 45 "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46)*

In the reading we see how nonbelieving goats are forcibly separated from the believing sheep by the Good Shepherd Jesus. Up until the time of this judgment these two groups of people who looked identical on the outside lived together in the world. This concept of a "mixed multitude" is clearly taught by Jesus in other places in the Gospel and especially in His parable of the wheat and the tares which also speaks of this same judgment (Matthew 13:24-30). In that parable Jesus said, "Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn'" (Matthew 13:30). In today's reading Jesus' point is similar, but He used the shepherd analogy that we saw in Ezekiel. The Good Shepherd who knows His Sheep will divide these two groups on the basis of their heart condition. The criteria that He will use was something He explained to Nicodemus in John Chapter 3, "You must be born from above (or again, Greek "anothen") to enter the kingdom of heaven" (John 3:3, with my explanation). Jesus said in that same Gospel, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28). Although Jesus as God knows His sheep instinctively, just like any shepherd, and they look the same on the outside, His sheep bear distinctive markings on the inside. These markings display themselves in their **behavior**, which is a way that even the worldly people can recognize them. This becomes clear in verses 35 -40. **Some** of the good works of a believer flow from a heart that has been changed by God (John 3:3), as James said, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:14). The sheep indulge in a variety of "sheeplike" behaviors. They feed the hungry (v. 35a), give drink to the thirsty (v. 35c), clothing to those without (v. 36a), visit the sick (v. 36b), and visit those in prison (v. 36b-c). Jesus then went on to explain that anytime you do these things for others it was as if you were doing it directly for Him (vv. 37-40, 42-45). Jesus also made it clear that the eternal destination (v. 46) for nonbelievers is the "eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 41). It's interesting to note

that Jesus' sheep sit at His right hand, while Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father (1 Peter 3:22).

The Gospel lesson helps us to prioritize and value what God cares about. In this world, attending to the needs of those who are marginalized in society is an opportunity for us to display what's really in our hearts. Do we have the love and compassion of God or ware we still living only for ourselves? Jesus shares specific types of needs that were commonplace in His day and age including hunger, thirst, lack of sufficient clothing, and imprisonment. You might be encountering other types of needs that God is asking you to meet (helping a child learn how to read, sacrificing some of your income to provide a home for someone, giving a friend a ride to work while their car is being repaired. The opportunities to meet other people's needs are endless. So we'll need to ask for wisdom to know what needs are our opportunity to love Christ by serving others.

What does all of this mean in our lives? First, we can trust that the Good Shepherd Who was the first to rise from the dead will also come for us one day when we enter eternity (John 14: 3). Second, even though we may be tortured by the ungodly behavior of people in the world, we can trust that God knows the intentions of our heart and those who are His. God will work it out, "Vengeance is mine says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). Second, We can rest in the fact that our good works flow out of a heart changed by God (Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:3) and these are evident to those who are unknowingly (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) on the broad road to destruction (Matthew 7:13). Our good works will be evident to them and will shed light on their evil works (John 3:20). Finally, we can trust that since we are believers we can trust in the fact that when we sit before the Lord in judgment it will be for the basis of rewards and not to determine our eternal destination.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. In the Bible the word translated "faith" brings with it the idea of expecting to have the things hoped for or living in light of an unseen reality. In your life, what does it mean to have faith? How does faith play into obedience? Are these two separate things in your mind or are they connected?

2. The Greek word translated "obedience" (hupakoe) according to Strong's Concordance (5218, drawn from 5219) means "attentive hearkening, i.e. (by implication) compliance or submission." Read the following Scripture and answer the question that follows.

> *25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to* ***obedience of faith****; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 16:25-27, emphasis added)*

In light of what you learned today along with Paul's teaching above on obedience of faith, what does it mean for you to walk in obedience of faith? How is your faith evident to others?

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/112314.cfm

First Reading EZ 34:11-12, 15-17

Second Reading 1 COR 15:20-26, 28

Gospel Reading MT 25:31-46

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 11-23-2014



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for 11-23-2014. This week we open with the first reading from Ezekiel in which we see the contrast between the ungodly shepherds and God the Good Shepherd. We include a great deal of the surrounding verses in order to help us to understand the meaning of the reading based upon its context. Then we move onto the second reading from 1

Corinthians in which we study the truth of the resurrection of believers and how this provides us with great hope. Finally, we conclude with the Gospel lesson from Matthew 25 in which we study the coming judgment of everyone who lives in the world at the end of the tribulation period. We pray that this study gives you much more insight as you attend Mass this coming Sunday.

The first reading is from the Prophet Ezekiel. The context is just after God told Ezekiel that although the people recognized him as a prophet and came to listen to him (Ezekiel 33:30-31c) they did not take his words into account and change their lives (Ezekiel 33:31d-ff). Instead, God told them that it would be afterwards that they would look back and "know that a prophet has been among them" (v. 33). In Ezekiel's time, and also in the present age God is not pleased with people going through the motions of dead religion, especially when they don't listen to God's word and let Him operate on their hearts and minds to change their behavior. Chapter 34, the section from which today's reading is taken, opens with God's scathing critique of the "shepherds of Israel," meaning the ungodly leaders of the nation including kings, priests, and prophets (except for Ezekiel, Daniel and Jeremiah his contemporaries). We get our word "pastor" from the Latin word for "shepherd." These passages are messianic, meaning that they prefigure the revelation of the True Shepherd Jesus Christ. In those days the people were as "sheep without a shepherd," something eerily reminiscent of what Jesus said some six hundred years later. "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36-37). As usual in these study notes it is crucially important to understand the context as the reading provides a **contrast** between the ungodly "shepherds" of Ezekiel's time and the Godly Shepherd God and His ultimate fulfillment in the Person of Jesus Christ. This contrast is important enough to understand that we have provided the first ten verses of the chapter leading up to today's reading.

> *1 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. 4 Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. 5 They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. 6 My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them.' 7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 8 'As I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock;' 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 10 Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from*

> *feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.'"(Ezekiel 34:1-10)*

This is the text of the reading for today that follows the opening of chapter 34. *Note: Verses 13-14 which were skipped in the reading were added in order to provide the full context.*

> 11 For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. 12 "As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. 13 I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. 14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord GOD. 16 "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment. 17 As for you, My flock, thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats." (Ezekiel 34:11-17).

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As we transition to the Gospel lesson, earlier we mentioned in the first reading how God is the Righteous Judge and in the second reading how one day He will come in Glory to rule and reign over the earth. One of the elements of rulership is acting as a Judge, and at the end His reign on earth Jesus will judge those who have survived the tribulation period at the conclusion of the Day of the Lord. This is the judgment that is marked by Jesus' statement earlier in Matthew 24, "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left" (Matthew 24:40). The one that is taken will be taken in judgment, the one that is left behind will enter the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ. This is similar to what happened to the nonbelievers during Noah's flood. Jesus said, "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be(Matthew 24:37-39). As you read the Gospel lesson from Matthew 25, keep in mind the context that this judgment is immediately preceding Jesus' Millennial Reign on earth, rather than the Great White Throne judgment spoken of in Revelation 20:11-15 which doesn't happen until **after** Jesus' thousand year reign on earth. This judgment is the "reaping" spoken of by John in the Book of Revelation Chapter 14. "And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.' Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped" (Revelation 14:15-16).

> *31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His*

> *right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' 41 Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' 44 Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' 45 "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46)*

In the reading we see how nonbelieving goats are forcibly separated from the believing sheep by the Good Shepherd Jesus. Up until the time of this judgment these two groups of people who looked identical on the outside lived together in the world. This concept of a "mixed multitude" is clearly taught by Jesus in other places in the Gospel and especially in His parable of the wheat and the tares which also speaks of this same judgment (Matthew 13:24-30). In that parable Jesus said, "Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn'" (Matthew 13:30). In today's reading Jesus' point is similar, but He used the shepherd analogy that we saw in Ezekiel. The Good Shepherd who knows His Sheep will divide these two groups on the basis of their heart condition. The criteria that He will use was something He explained to Nicodemus in John Chapter 3, "You must be born from above (or again, Greek "anothen") to enter the kingdom of heaven" (John 3:3, with my explanation). Jesus said in that same Gospel, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28). Although Jesus as God knows His sheep instinctively, just like any shepherd, and they look the same on the outside, His sheep bear distinctive markings on the inside. These markings display themselves in their **behavior**, which is a way that even the worldly people can recognize them. This becomes clear in verses 35 -40. **Some** of the good works of a believer flow from a heart that has been changed by God (John 3:3), as James said, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:14). The sheep indulge in a variety of "sheeplike" behaviors. They feed the hungry (v. 35a), give drink to the thirsty (v. 35c), clothing to those without (v. 36a), visit the sick (v. 36b), and visit those in prison (v. 36b-c). Jesus then went on to explain that anytime you do these things for others it was as if you were doing it directly for Him (vv. 37-40, 42-45). Jesus also made it clear that the eternal destination (v. 46) for nonbelievers is the "eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 41). It's interesting to note

that Jesus' sheep sit at His right hand, while Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father (1 Peter 3:22).

The Gospel lesson helps us to prioritize and value what God cares about. In this world, attending to the needs of those who are marginalized in society is an opportunity for us to display what's really in our hearts. Do we have the love and compassion of God or ware we still living only for ourselves? Jesus shares specific types of needs that were commonplace in His day and age including hunger, thirst, lack of sufficient clothing, and imprisonment. You might be encountering other types of needs that God is asking you to meet (helping a child learn how to read, sacrificing some of your income to provide a home for someone, giving a friend a ride to work while their car is being repaired. The opportunities to meet other people's needs are endless. So we'll need to ask for wisdom to know what needs are our opportunity to love Christ by serving others.

What does all of this mean in our lives? First, we can trust that the Good Shepherd Who was the first to rise from the dead will also come for us one day when we enter eternity (John 14: 3). Second, even though we may be tortured by the ungodly behavior of people in the world, we can trust that God knows the intentions of our heart and those who are His. God will work it out, "Vengeance is mine says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). Second, We can rest in the fact that our good works flow out of a heart changed by God (Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:3) and these are evident to those who are unknowingly (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) on the broad road to destruction (Matthew 7:13). Our good works will be evident to them and will shed light on their evil works (John 3:20). Finally, we can trust that since we are believers we can trust in the fact that when we sit before the Lord in judgment it will be for the basis of rewards and not to determine our eternal destination.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. In the Bible the word translated "faith" brings with it the idea of expecting to have the things hoped for or living in light of an unseen reality. In your life, what does it mean to have faith? How does faith play into obedience? Are these two separate things in your mind or are they connected?

2. The Greek word translated "obedience" (hupakoe) according to Strong's Concordance (5218, drawn from 5219) means "attentive hearkening, i.e. (by implication) compliance or submission." Read the following Scripture and answer the question that follows.

> *25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to* ***obedience of faith****; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 16:25-27, emphasis added)*

In light of what you learned today along with Paul's teaching above on obedience of faith, what does it mean for you to walk in obedience of faith? How is your faith evident to others?

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Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/112314.cfm

First Reading EZ 34:11-12, 15-17

Second Reading 1 COR 15:20-26, 28

Gospel Reading MT 25:31-46

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Jesus the Christ



HISTORY OF
Genealogy of
Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38
Facts before the birth of

The angel Gabriel appears to Mary (at Nazareth)
Luke 1:26-38
Mary visits Elisabeth (at Hebron?)
Luke 1:39-56
Mary's magnificat (at Hebron?)
Luke 1:46-55
An angel appears to Joseph concerning Mary (at Nazareth)
Matthew 1:18-25
Birth of (at Bethlehem)
Luke 2:1-7
Angels appear to the shepherds (in the vicinity of Bethlehem)
Luke 2:8-20
Magi (the wise men from the east) visit (at Bethlehem)
Matthew 2:1-12
Circumcision of (at Bethlehem)
Luke 2:21
Is presented in the temple (in Jerusalem)
Luke 2:21-38
Flight into and return from Egypt
Matthew 2:13-23
Discussions with the religious experts in the temple area (In Jerusalem)
Luke 2:41-52
Is immersed by John in the Jordan River
Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23
Temptation of (in the desert of Judaea)
Matthew 1:11; Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1-13
John's testimony concerning him
John 1:1-18
Testimony of John the Baptist concerning (at Bethabara)
John 1:19-34
Disciples adhere to
John 1:35-51
Miracle at Cana of Galilee
John 2:1-12
Drives the money-changers from the temple (in Jerusalem)
John 2:13-25
Nicodemus comes to Jesus (in Jerusalem)
John 3:1-21
His disciples immerse some of the people (at Aenon)
John 3:22; 4:2
Returns to Galilee
Matthew 4:12; Mark 1:14; Luke 4:14; John 4:1-3

Visits Sychar and teaches the Samaritan woman
John 4:4-42
Teaches in Galilee
Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14; 15; Luke 4:14; 15; John 4:43-45
Heals a nobleman's son of Capernaum (at Cana of Galilee)
John 4:46-54
Is rejected by the people of Nazareth; lives at Capernaum
Matthew 4:13-16; Luke 4:16-31
Chooses Peter, Andrew, James, and John as disciples; miracle Of the catch of fish (at Capernaum)
Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11
Preaches throughout Galilee
Matthew 4:23-25; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44
Heals a demoniac (at Capernaum)
Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37
Heals Peter's mother-in-law (at Capernaum)
Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41
Heals a leper (in Galilee)
Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16
Heals a paralyzed man (at Capernaum)
Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26
Calls Matthew (Capernaum)
Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:13,14; Luke 5:27,28
Heals an immobile man at the pool of Bethesda (the best mss. have "Bethzatha") on the Sabbath day; is persecuted, and makes his defense
John 5
Defines the law of the Sabbath on the occasion of his disciples plucking the ears of grain (at Capernaum)
Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5
Heals a man having a withered hand (at Capernaum)
Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11
Withdraws from Capernaum to Lake Galilee, where he heals Many
Matthew 12:15-21; Mark 3:7-12
Goes up onto a mountain, and calls and commissions twelve Disciples (in Galilee)
Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-19
Delivers the "Sermon on the Mount" (in Galilee)
Matthew 5; 6; 7; Luke 6:20-49
Heals the servant of the centurion (near Capernaum)
Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
Raises the widow's son from the dead (at Nain)
Luke 7:11-17
Receives the message from John the Baptist (in Galilee)
Matthew 11:2-19; Luke 7:18-35

Rebukes the unbelieving cities about Capernaum
Matthew 11:20-30
Anointed by a sinful woman (at Capernaum)
Luke 7:36-50
Preaches in the cities of Galilee
Luke 8:1-3
Heals a demoniac, and denounces the scribes and Pharisees (In Galilee)
Matthew 12:22-37; Mark 3:19-30; Luke 11:14-26
Replies to the scribes and Pharisees who seek a sign from Him (in Galilee)
Matthew 12:38-45; Luke 11:16-36
Denounces the Pharisees and other hypocrites (in Galilee)
Luke 11:37-54
Discourses to his disciples (in Galilee)
Luke 12:1-59
Parable of the barren fig tree (in Galilee)
Luke 13:6-9
Parable of the sower (at Lake Galilee)
Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-25; Luke 8:4-18
Parable of the tares and other teachings (in Galilee)
Matthew 13:24-53; Mark 4:26-34
Crosses Lake Galilee and quiets the squall
Matthew 8:18-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25
Miracle of the swine (in Gadara)
Matthew 8:28-33; Mark 5:1-21; Luke 8:26-40
Returns to Capernaum
Matthew 9:1; Mark 5:21; Luke 8:40
Eats with tax collectors and sinners, and discourses on Fasting (Capernaum)
Matthew 9:10-17; Mark 2:15-22; Luke 5:29-39
Raises to life the daughter of Jairus, and heals the woman Who has the issue of blood (at Capernaum)
Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56
Heals two blind men and casts out an evil spirit from a mute Boy (at Capernaum)
Matthew 9:27-34
Returns to Nazareth
Matthew 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6
Teaches in various towns in Galilee
Matthew 9:35-38
Instructs his disciples and empowers them to heal diseases And cast out unclean spirits
Matthew 10; Mark 6:6-13; Luke 9:1-6
Herod (Antipas) falsely supposes him to be John, whom he had Beheaded
Matthew 14:1,2,6-12; Mark 6:14-16,21-29; Luke 9:7-9
The twelve apostles return; he goes to the desert, Multitudes follow him; he feeds five thousand (at

Lake Galilee)
Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14
Walks on the lake (Lake Galilee)
Matthew 14:22-36; Mark 6:45-56; John 6:15-21
Teaches in the synagogue in Capernaum
John 6:22-65
Some disciples forsake him (at Capernaum)
John 6:66-71
He justifies his disciples in eating without washing their Hands (at Capernaum)
Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23
Heals the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman (near Tyre And Sidon)
Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30
Heals a deaf man (in the Decapolis region)
Matthew 15:29-31; Mark 7:31-37
Feeds more than four-thousand people
Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9
Refuses to give a sign to the Pharisees (in the region of Magdala)
Matthew 16:1-4; Mark 8:10-12
Cautions his disciples against, the leaven (teachings) of Hypocrisy (on Lake Galilee)
Matthew 16:4-12; Mark 8:13-21
Heals a blind man (at Bethsaida)
Mark 8:22-26
Foretells his own death and resurrection (near Caesarea Philippi)
Matthew 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-38; 9:1; Luke 9:22-27
Is transfigured
Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36
Heals a demoniac (near Caesarea Philippi)
Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43
Foretells his own death and resurrection (in Galilee)
Matthew 17:22,23; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43-45
Miracle of the temple tax money in the fish's mouth
Matthew 17:24-27
Reproves the ambition of his disciples (at Capernaum)
Matthew 18:1-35; Mark 9:33-50; Luke 9:46-50
Reproves the intolerance of his disciples
Mark 9:38,39; Luke 9:49,50
Journeys to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Tabernacles, Passing through Samaria
Luke 9:51-62; John 7:2-11
Commissions the seventy disciples (in Samaria)
Luke 10:1-16
Heals ten lepers (near the border between Samaria and Galilee)
Luke 17:11-19

Teaches in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles
John 7:14-53; 8
Answers a Biblical expert, who tests his wisdom with the Question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" by the Parable of the Good Samaritan (in Jerusalem)
Luke 10:25-37
Hears the report of the seventy disciples (in Jerusalem)
Luke 10:17-24
Teaches in the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (in Bethany)
Luke 10:38-42
Teaches his disciples to pray
Luke 11:1-13
Heals a blind man, who, because of his faith in Jesus, was Excommunicated (in Jerusalem)
John 9
Teaches people (in Jerusalem)
John 9:39-41; 10:1-21
Teaches in the temple (at Jerusalem) at the Feast of Dedication
John 10:22-39
Goes to Bethabara to escape violence from the rulers (east Of the Jordan River)
John 10:40-42; 11:3-16
Returns to Bethany and raises Lazarus from the dead
John 11:1-46
Escapes to the town of Ephraim from the conspiracy led by Caiaphas, the high priest (in Judaea,)
John 11:47-54
Journeys toward Jerusalem to attend the Passover; heals many Who are diseased, and teaches the people (in Peraea)
Matthew 19:1,2; Mark 10:1; Luke 13:10-35
Dines with a Pharisee on the Sabbath (in Peraea)
Luke 14:1-24
Teaches the multitude the conditions of discipleship (in Peraea)
Luke 14:25-35
Enunciates the parables of the lost sheep, of the lost piece Of silver, of the prodigal son, and of the unjust steward (In Peraea)
Luke 15:1-32; 16:1-13
Reproves the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (in Peraea)
Luke 16
Enunciates the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (in Peraea)
Luke 16:19-31
Teaches his disciples concerning offenses, meekness, and Humility (in Peraea)
Luke 17:1-10
Teaches the Pharisees concerning the coming of his kingdom (In Peraea)
Luke 17:20-37
Enunciates the parables of the unjust judge, and the Pharisee and publican praying in the temple (in

Peraea)
Luke 18:1-14
Interprets the law concerning marriage and divorce (in Peraea)
Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12
Blesses little children (in Peraea)
Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17
Receives the rich young ruler who asks what he shall do to Inherit eternal life (in Peraea)
Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-24
Enunciates the parable of the vineyard (in Peraea)
Matthew 20:1-16
Foretells his own death and resurrection (in Peraea)
Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34
Listens to the mother of James and John in behalf of her Sons (in Peraea)
Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45
Heals two blind men (at Jericho)
Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-50; Luke 18:35-43
Visits Zacchaeus
Luke 19:1-10
Enunciates the parable of the pounds (in Jericho)
Luke 19:11-28
Goes to Bethany six days before the Passover
John 12:1-9
Triumphal entry into Jerusalem, while the people throw palm Branches on the road in front of him
Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19
Enters the temple (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:11; Luke 19:45
Drives the money changers out of the temple (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 21:12,13; Luke 19:45,46
Heals the sick people in the temple courtyard (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 21:14
Teaches daily in the temple courtyard (in Jerusalem)
Luke 19:47,48
Performs the miracle of causing the barren fig tree to Wither (just outside Jerusalem)
Matthew 21:17-22; Mark 11:12-14,20-22
Enunciates
The parable of the two sons (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 21:28-31
The parable of the wicked husbandmen (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19
The parable of the marriage banquet (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24
Tested by the Pharisees and the Herodians, and enunciates The duty of a citizen to his government

(in Jerusalem)
Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26
Tested by the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the Dead (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40
Tested by a Biblical expert (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34
Exposes the hypocrisies of the scribes and Pharisees (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 23; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:45-47
Verifies the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the unbelieving Jews
John 12:37-50
Foretells the destruction of the temple, and of Jerusalem (In Jerusalem)
Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-36
Laments over Jerusalem (just outside Jerusalem)
Matthew 23:37; Luke 19:41-44
Enunciates the parables of the ten virgins and of the Talents
Matthew 25:1-30
Foretells the scenes of the day of judgment (on the Mount of Olives)
Matthew 25:31-46
Anointed with precious ointment (in Bethany)
Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8
His last Passover meal and his establishment of the Lord's Supper (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-20
Washes the disciples' feet (in Jerusalem)
John 13:1-17
Foretells his betrayal (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 26:23; Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21; John 13:18
Accuses Judas of his betrayal (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 26:21-25; Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21-23; John 13:21-30
Teaches his disciples, and comforts them with promises, and Promises the gift of the Holy Spirit (in Jerusalem)
John 14; 15; 16
One of his last prayers (in Jerusalem)
John 17
Retires to Gethsemane (on the Mount of Olives)
Matthew 26:30,36-46; Mark 14:26,32-42; Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1
Is betrayed and apprehended (in the garden of Gethsemane)
Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-54,66-72; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-12
Trial of, before Caiaphas (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 26:57,58,69-75; Mark 14:53,54,66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:13-18,25-27
Tried by the council (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 26:59-68; Mark 14:55-65; Luke 22:63-71; John 18:19-21
Led by the council to Pilate (in Jerusalem)

Matthew 27:1,2,11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38
Arraigned before Herod Antipas (in Jerusalem)
Luke 23:6-12
Tried in front of Pilate (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39,40; 19:1-16
Mocked by the soldiers (in Jerusalem)
Matthew 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20
Is led away to be crucified (from Jerusalem)
Matthew 27:31-34; Mark 15:20-23; Luke 23:26-32; John 19:16,17
Crucified (just outside Jerusalem)
Matthew 27:35-56; Mark 15:24-41; Luke 23:33-49; John 19:18-30
Taken down from the cross and buried (just outside Jerusalem)
Matthew 27:57-66; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:31-42
Arises from the dead (just outside Jerusalem)
Matthew 28:2-15; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18
Is seen by Peter (near Jerusalem)
Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5
Appears to two disciples who journey to the village of Emmaus
Mark 16:12,13; Luke 24:13-35
Appears in the midst of the disciples, when Thomas was Absent (in Jerusalem)
Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23
Appears to his disciples, when Thomas was present (in Jerusalem)
John 20:26-29
Appears to his disciples at Lake Galilee
Matthew 28:16; John 21:1,2
Appears to the apostles and more than five-hundred followers On a mountain in Galilee
Matthew 28:16-20
See lso
1 Corinthians 15:6
Appears to James and also to all the apostles (in Jerusalem)
Acts 1:3-8; 1 Corinthians 15:7
Ascends to heaven (near Bethany)
Mark 16:19,20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12
Appears to Paul (on the road to Damascus)
Acts 9:3-17; 18:9; 22:14,18; 23:11; 26:16; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8
Appears to the Apostle John (on Patmos Island)
Revelation 1:10-18
MISCELLANEOUS FACTS CONCERNING
Brothers (physical) of
Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; 1 Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:19
Sisters of
Matthew 13:56; Mark 6:3

Was with the Israelites in the wilderness
1 Corinthians 10:4,9; Hebrews 11:26; Jude 1:5
UNCLASSIFIED SCRIPTURES RELATING TO
John 6:35,41,48,50,51,53-58; 8:12; 10:9-11,14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1,5-7; Colossians 3:4; 2 Timothy 1:10; Revelation 1:18; 22:13
ASCENSION OF
Psalm 47:5; 68:18; Mark 16:19; Luke 24:26,50,51; John 1:51; 6:62; 7:33,34,39; 14:2-4,12,28; 16:5,7,10,16,25,28; 17:5,13; 20:17; Acts 1:9; 3:21; Ephesians 1:20; 4:8-10; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:3; 4:14; 9:24
See JESUS, EXALTATIO OF
ATONEMENT BY
See ATONEMENT
ATTRIBUTES OF
(See each one in its alphabetical order, below)
BIRTH OF
See JESUS, INCARNATIO OF
COMPASSION OF
Isaiah 40:11; 42:3; 53:4; 63:7-9; Matthew 8:3,16,17; 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:11-13; 20:34; 23:37; Mark 6:34; 8:2,3; Luke 7:13; 19:41,42; John 11:34-38; 18:8,9; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Hebrews 4:15
See JESUS, THE CHRIST, LOVE OF, below
CONFESSING
See CONFESSION, OF CHRIST
See TESTIMONY, RELIGIOUS
CREATOR
John 1:3,10; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16,17; Hebrews 1:2,10; Revelation 3:14
See JESUS, THE CHRIST, PREEXISTENCE OF, below
DEATH OF
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-A Merarite Numbers 3:35

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-1. AKohathite 1 Samuel 1:1; 1 Chronicles 6:35

-2. A district northwest of Jerusalem 1 Samuel 9:5

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