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

Sunday Mass Study Notes for Sunday, 10-9-2016



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **10-9-2016**. The week in the Gospel reading we will discuss the topic of faith through the story of the ten lepers Jesus healed on His way through Samaria. This week I include in the addendum to the story some teaching on how to find God's will.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading today is from the Book of Second Kings and is the story of the foreign warrior Naaman's miraculous healing from leprosy. Leprosy is a disfiguring and possibly fatal skin disease that plagued the ancient world. The cause was only discovered in the late 1800's as certain bacteria. A cure was developed after 1940 and subsequent resistant to the treatment required the development of new therapies that only became available in the 1980's. The Jewish Law contains very detailed procedures (Leviticus 13 and 14) for dealing with those afflicted or possibly afflicted with leprosy. A portion of Leviticus 13 is as follows.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest, or to one of his sons the priests. And the priest shall look at the mark on the skin of the body, and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is an infection of leprosy; when the priest has looked at him, he shall pronounce him unclean. But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his

body, and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and the hair on it has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate him who has the infection for seven days. And the priest shall look at him on the seventh day, and if in his eyes the infection has not changed, and the infection has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him for seven more days." (Leviticus 13:1-5 NASB)

The text continues for many verses. It is very significant that nowhere in this chapter or anywhere in the Bible does it say that leprosy could be treated or cured outside of a miracle. Once it was determined a person had leprosy they were pronounced unclean. "And the priest shall look, and if the scab has spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is leprosy" (v.8). Once the pronouncement of being unclean was made another whole set of Laws kicked in. They would have been considered ceremonially unclean but also physically unclean and as such would have been subject to quarantine which meant that they would have to live outside of the city. Lepers were required to live alone and announce to everyone, "Unclean! Unclean!" (v. 46) while they were still at a distance. Some lepers in Syria were evidently treated differently as we will see in the case of Naaman in the first reading today from 2 Kings. Naaman, perhaps because of his position as a valiant warrior, wasn't quarantined and forced to live outside the city gate.

Since today's reading is the climax of the story, here are the events leading up to that point. "Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper" (2 Kings 5:1). The context is that Naaman was instructed by the Prophet Elisha, a renowned man of God, to go and wash seven times in the Jordan for the purpose of being cured of his leprosy. The whole idea of the healing began through the plea of a little Israeli girl that had been taken captive and had become a servant to Naaman's wife. This little girl, someone who was on the bottom rung of the social ladder, told her master about Elisha and that he could cure his leprosy. "And she said to her mistress, 'I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy.'"(v. 3). This little Israeli child believed that Elisha could heal her master's husband Naaman. Next the King of Aram sent a letter along with a large sum of money to the King of Israel King Jehoram, and he made the arrangements for Elisha to intervene on Naamaan's behalf.

Now, let's read the first reading for today which is the story of the healing of Naaman in 2 Kings 5:14-17.

First Reading:

2 Kings 5:14-17 NASB 14 So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean. 15 When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him, he said, "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; so please take a present from your servant now." 16 But he said, "As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing." And he urged him to take it, but he refused. 17 Naaman said, "If not, please let your

servant at least be given two mules' load of earth; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord.

It is likely that Naaman expected something of a royal treatment when he arrived in Israel for his healing appointment since he came with a large sum of money and a letter from a very important foreign king. Perhaps he expected a religious ceremony with the waving of hands, pronouncements made to a god, animal sacrifices and whatever else would have been the norm back in Aram. Naaman was likely very surprised when we was instructed to go wash in the swirling, swift waters of the Jordan. "What good would that do," he may have thought. Nevertheless, he responded in faith and began the baptismal process as instructed by Elisha. One dip, two dips, three, four. On he went. He could have stopped at that point but being a warrior he was probably good at following instruction. Five, six, and finally seven. Whoosh, he came up out of the water and was healed! Naaman responded in faith by following Elisha's instructions and God provided the miracle of healing.

The New Testament says in the Book of First John:

14 And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him (1 John 5:14-15).

Meditate upon this for a moment. If we ask anything according to God's will He hears and we may have confidence that our prayer will be answered. God's answer may be yes, no, or wait. But we, like Elisha, and even a person outside of the Jewish race like Naaman, may have faith that our prayers will be answered. However, how do *we* know God's will? We will examine that in the Going Deeper section at the end of today's study.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from 2 Timothy 2:8-13 in which we find a call to walk in faith. Paul continues his instructions to young Timothy concerning critical matters of the Christian faith.

Second Reading:

2 Timothy 2:8-13 NASB 8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. 11 It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

The "trustworthy statement" at the end was the basis for a hymn in the early church and is a an excellent verse which to memorize. "For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." The statement is in the form of a series of cause and effect phrases:

If we died with him, meaning that we are born from above spiritually (John 3:3) through belief in Jesus, **then** we participate in the life of Jesus through his Holy Spirit living in us.

If we endure **then** we reign with him. This has the sense of "already, not yet." We enter the kingdom of heaven through belief and are born from above as found in John 3:3, "You must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven." Therefore, in a sense we reign as a believer on earth. Yet we will reign with Jesus in the future when we go to heaven, this is the sense of "not yet."

If we deny him **then** he will deny us, meaning that we are free to reject his free gift of eternal life (Ephesians 2:8-9).

If we are faithless **then** Jesus remains faithful because it is a logical impossibility for Him to neglect someone who belongs to him.

The big idea in this text is that perseverance isn't an option but is a quality of a true believer.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The context and background of the reading from Luke 17 is that that Jesus was traveling through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem. Along the way, he encountered a group of ten lepers and at least one of them was a Samaritan. There are two cultural conflicts in this story that would have created tension in the minds of the Jewish disciples of Jesus. First, there is the whole issue of leprosy as we discussed in 2 Kings. Second, there is the issue of the Samaritan race. These were inhabitants in the region of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This mixed race consisted of two groups; the first was foreign immigrants brought there from the Assyrian empire after the deportation of the Jews to Assyria in 722 BC. The second group was those Jews left behind during that Assyrian invasion. Over the centuries, these groups intermarried in defiance of the Jewish Law and adopted their own unique worship practices. The Samaritans were considered "half breeds" and therefore unclean according to Jewish Law. They had 800 years to develop aberrant theology. Jews that needed to journey through this region would often go many miles out of their way to avoid them.

Gospel Reading:

11 While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; 13 and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed. 15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his

face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? 18 Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well." Luke 17:11-19 NASB

It seems that this group of lepers had heard about Jesus' miraculous ability to heal. The ten men set out with some amount of faith that they would be healed because as we saw in the Law they could only present themselves to the priests *after* they had been healed. Next, the men were healed as they walked on their way to wherever the priests were located. At least one of them was a Samaritan, considered a half-breed and unclean by the Jews. A person with leprosy would have been on the lowest rung of the social scale and a Samaritan man with leprosy on the absolute bottom. It seems possible that the other nine men were more concerned about restoration of their social standing in the community and keeping the Jewish Law than in returning to thank Jesus for the miracle. The officials in the synagogue would have been very surprised to meet ten men who had been healed from leprosy. Even though the Law contained provisions for the procedures to be taken in such a case it's almost certain that none of the priests would have encountered anyone that had ever been healed from that awful disease.

However, one man, a Samaritan, turned back to thank Jesus. It's very likely, as in the other cases of Jesus healing people, that Jesus healed more than just this man's physical condition. This person seems to have received salvation and healing, evidenced by his "glorifying God with a loud voice" (v. 15c). His natural response to this gift that he knew could only have come from God was to praise Him! This is what set him apart from the other nine. He evidently had no other choice than to turn around and praise God for this mighty miracle. His heart and his body had been healed and his natural reaction was praise.

There are three key points of this Gospel teaching. First, Jesus isn't a respecter of persons, he offers saving faith to anyone from any race or position of life, even those at the very lowest position on the social scale like the Samaritan lepers. Second, if we expect God to act we must ask in faith and then walk according to God's instructions. For us, God's instructions are primarily contained in His Word, the Bible. We should only trust our conscience if it aligns with the will of God revealed in biblical absolutes and principles. We may obtain verification of our intended decision through godly counsel. Finally, we are called to consider all that God has done for us and to praise Him! Our rightful response any time we consider all that God has provided for us should be praise. The outward manifestation of the inward reality of faith is glorifying God.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. Consider this key point: Jesus offers saving faith to everyone.

A. If we are going to live like Jesus, consider the society and socioeconomic strata of the region where you live. What are two groups of people that are on the lowest rung of society, the Samaritan lepers of the age?

B. Consider the biblical decision making process outlined in the study today. What are some biblical absolutes and biblical principles in the Bible that speak to how you could minister to people in the two groups you listed above?

C. While I was in middle school, I succumbed to peer pressure, looked down upon and said mean things to a certain unattractive, poor girl in our class. I began to call her names without regard to her feelings. At some point, our paths diverged and I moved on with my life of college and a new career as an engineer. In my middle thirties God began working on my heart to look up this woman and apologize to her. With the advent of the Internet, the task was quite easy so I connected with her on Facebook and begged for her forgiveness. I was pleased to find out that she was a Christian and was willing to forgive me! As I looked back, I wish that I had the insight to "adopt" this woman as my friend. After thinking about her, I issued this challenge to my nephew. I challenged him to think about some unfortunate classmate that he had been looking down on, picking on, or others were doing such things. I asked him to set down his pride and come alongside that person as a friend.

Is there someone that needs you as a friend?

2. Consider this key point:: If we expect God to act we must act in faith and the walk according to God's instructions.

A. In what areas of your life and you being called to exercise faith?

B. What biblical instructions do you need to obey in order to walk in faith?

3. Consider this key point: Praise is the outward manifestation of the inward reality of faith.

A. Make a list of some of the way in which God has worked on your behalf.

B. Thank Him for these things and share your praise with others.

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/100916.cfm

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 144

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

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

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Going Deeper

It was a dark, moonless night as I looked around my campsite out in the middle of a forest in an area known to have a decent population of bears. I had driven up to the north country to get away from the city in order to come to an important decision about a sense that God was calling me into ministry. How could I make this life changing decision in light of all of the obstacles that I faced?

Back in 2004, I sensed that God was placing a calling upon my life to enter the ministry. I began a period of intense prayer and fasting. The Bible was full of biblical principles which I seemed to meet (see 1 Timothy 3) that I found through my own Bible study and the reading of the book "Decision Making and the Will of God" by Maxson and Friesen (which I recommend). Though the biblical principles were clear regarding this I met with several Christian men with whom I had been close to over the recent years. They agreed to pray about it and counsel me. God had been orchestrating my circumstances by bringing a clear exit to me at my work. The company at which I worked had just lost a major contract and was being forced to cut back. After much debate and prayer, I decided to make some applications at various seminaries in the region. I continued in prayer and fasting, and was accepted at two seminaries. Then the day came to make a decision. I wish I could say that I had the peace of God in my life at that point, but I was pretty entangled in the world. I owned a house in a large city and an airplane that I needed to sell. Going to seminary meant moving to a different state several hundred miles away. In desperation, I packed up my truck and headed out to camp in the forest a couple of hundred miles north, completely away from civilization. It was a moonless, overcast night and if I didn't have a flashlight I could have easily become separated from my campsite if I wandered away very far. The threat of running into a bear was running through my mind as well. As I sat around my campfire that night without all of the distractions of the city, I came to an amazing realization. The door was open either way; the decision was up to me! At that point, I just weighed my options and decided on the most prudent course of action. Once I made up my mind doors began opening and I began to sense that I was walking in God's will. *I had the peace of God after studying the counsel of God, listening to the people of God and the circumstances from God*.

Here are some general principles for finding God's will.* These boil down to studying the counsel of God found in the Bible (absolutes and principles), seeking feedback from the people of God, and finally, discerning the circumstances from God that leads to the peace of God.

1. First, study the Bible and determine if any **biblical absolutes** apply regarding your decision. This would include things like do not lie, kill, steal, or commit adultery. If the insight you were seeking from God was regarding whether you should burn a copy of a music CD for a friend, there is a clear biblical absolute prohibiting this action (i.e. do not steal).
2. Second, study the Bible and locate any **biblical principles** that cast light upon your decision. This includes things such as God's calling to fulfill the Great Commission by witnessing to nonbelievers and "discipling" believers (Matthew 28:16-20). An example in this second

category could deal with a decision to break away from a healthy group of believers because of conviction or some sin in our life. This would result in us becoming more of a lone wolf Christian in contradiction to a principle in the Bible not to forsake the assembling of ourselves (Hebrews 10:25).

3. The third step in determining God's will is often the consideration of **godly counsel**, the people of God. Have you been willing to meet with another believer and subject yourself to their evaluation of the matter under consideration? Perhaps you would consider taking up the matter with a parish counsel of other spiritual body of elders to help you to determine God's will concerning a certain matter.
4. The final step in the decision making process is the **confirmation and peace of God**. Although this is not a hard fast rule, the peace of God generally comes only after the consideration of two things, personal circumstances and godly counsel.

[*Adapted from resources found at Discipleship Tape Ministries (dtm.org).]

Mass-Study-Notes-for-Sunday_10-09-2016.pdfDownload

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 2-15-2015



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for 2-15-2015. This week we open with the first reading

from Leviticus in which we see the procedure for dealing with the skin disease of leprosy. While this may not seem like a random passage to read, it becomes an important back drop for the New Testament and Gospel reading where we learn that whole-hearted obedience to which Jesus calls His followers.

The first reading is from the Book of Leviticus, this provides some insight into the incident between Jesus and a man afflicted with leprosy that we will see later in the Gospel lesson.

(Leviticus 13:1-2) 1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, 2 "When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests.

(Leviticus 13:44-46) 44 he is a leprous man, he is unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his infection is on his head. 45 "As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' 46 "He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

The Old Testament law gave specific regulations for the well-being of a community. One such regulation was that of infectious diseases. The disease of leprosy was could devastate a community, so God gave them instructions on how to deal with this problem. The person who had leprosy had to be inspected by the priest and separate himself from the rest of the people. This would be a dire diagnosis. The law also provided instructions for what a leprous person would do if they became healed. They must present themselves to the priest and offer a sacrifice (Lev. 14:1-32). This information will be important as we move toward the Gospel, since Jesus healed a man of leprosy. The priests would have had to dig out their law books to put this into practice, since being healed of leprosy was uncommon until Jesus came onto the scene.

The second reading is from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. In the context of this passage, Saint Paul addresses many issues that were perplexing the new believers in Corinth who had to make many decisions in a pagan culture. One of the decisions had to do with eating food that had been previously sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 10:18-19). He says that the food does not inherently have anything sacrilegious about it, but one's motive was really the determining factor in all decisions for a godly life.

(1 Corinthians 10:31 – 11:1) 31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved. 1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

Paul teaches that the underlying motive of the heart needs to be God's glory, no matter what we do. It's hard for us to imagine how eating or drinking can even have religious connotations, but he affirms that all of life can be sacred if done with God and His glory in mind. Part of God's glory is when we surrender our wants and demands in order to bring others to know Him. Paul laid down his Jewish food purity laws to reach the Gentiles living in a pagan culture. We may not have this same backdrop, but we can still be challenged by this to consider how our lives lived for God can be useful for ministering to others who are different than us. That is how we can imitate Paul and so imitate Christ.

An example of this very thing happened this summer when we were in France on a cultural discovery trip. After church, we were invited over for a very culturally French tradition called "aperitif." This tradition is a rare invitation to foreigners, so we felt honored to be invited to a French person's home. But we were not normally used to imbibing in strong drink in the middle of the day, especially right after church. We drank and enjoyed their hospitality with a clear conscience because of Paul's teaching. We were building bridges with people who needed to see the light of Christ in our lives and we met them on their turf for God's glory.

The Gospel lesson is from Mark Chapter one which continues from last week.

*(Mark 1:40-45) 40 And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and *said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 44 and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.*

We see in this story the fulfillment of the Old Testament passage on leprosy we studied in the first reading. In those days there was no known cure for leprosy so you can imagine the desperation of anyone afflicted with the awful, skin eating disease. Several insights can be observed from this interaction. First, the leper knew he had a problem that he couldn't fix on his own. Second, he came humbly to Jesus, falling on his knees and asking him for healing. Even this early on in Jesus' ministry the man knew that Jesus offered a potential cure for his disease. Third, we see that Jesus had compassion on this desperate man and was willing to heal him. Fourth, in all probability the priests had never in all of Jewish history ever had the need to exercise the provisions in the Law for the confirmation of a leper's healing. Jesus instructed the man to go to the priest as commanded in the Law of Moses (v. 44). Mark may have included this interaction in order to confirm the evidence that Jesus was the promised Messiah, fulfilling the Law and the Prophets.

Unfortunately, the man failed to follow Jesus' order to not proclaim the source of his healing, but

rather went and widely spread the news about this miraculous event. This story set the tone for Jesus' subsequent ministry in which throngs of people came to him for healing but at the same time neglected the weightier matters of the heart (Matthew 23:23).

What does this mean for us today? Like the leprous man, we too can be tempted to turn to God in times of crisis to heal our temporal circumstances, without being willing to completely follow Him in trusting obedience. It is easy for us to think we know better than Jesus in other matters of our lives that don't seem to be so desperate or even "spiritual." But as we saw in 1 Cor. 10:31, everything can be considered spiritual and done for God's glory. Having a trusting obedience is what glorifies God. In Luke's Gospel we find a circumstance where Jesus healed ten lepers, but only one of them returned to Jesus and thanked Him (Luke 17:11-19). Although God stands ready to help deliver us from our temporary circumstance, we need to be willing to look beyond them to see what God could be doing through them, so that He can be glorified in our lives.

When I was a teenager, I used to go out and party with my friends, and then drag myself to Mass the next morning. This type of compartmentalization was a subtle way for me to justify doing my own thing and still trying to be in good with God. I felt that by going to Mass I was earning points with Him to make up for the bad things that I did. Since then, I've come to understand that Jesus calls us to live an integrated life. I realized that I could not live an obedient life without God's help. I came to Jesus like the leper and fell on my knees and asked Jesus to heal me of the corruption and discontinuity within my own heart. He was willing, just as with the leprous man. When we come to Him and ask Him to save us, He gives us His Spirit to help us live a unified life (John 14:16). We don't have to end up like the leprous man, who merely used Jesus to get his way. Instead, we can surrender to God and let Him have His way in and through us. This is the way of Christianity.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways can you relate to my story of how I lived during my teenage years? Are there still ways you are tempted to live a "compartmentalized" faith? What are the root issues that need to be confronted and confessed to Jesus, our one mediator (1 Tim. 2:5)?

2. How can you see your life choices fall under the umbrella of God's glory? We may not be able to do "spiritual" things all day, but if we are surrendered to God, everything we do can be spiritual and give Him glory. Are there ways that you can have this mindset at your job, in your family responsibilities and even as you interact with people who are different from you? How might your week look different if you sacrificed your preferences to serve others so that others might see Christ in you?

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/021515.cfm

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

First Reading LV 13:1-2, 44-46

Second Reading 1 COR 10:31—11:1

Gospel Reading MK 1:40-45

Source(s):

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

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB