

Bible Challenge September 18- 24, 2016

Advent's weekly Bible Challenge is based upon the readings assigned for each Sunday. The basic challenge is to re-read the texts that were read on Sunday morning and included in the Sunday bulletin. The Adventure and Explorer challenges are suggestions of different ways to deepen your knowledge of the Bible. The challenge is organized as one reading for each of five days, but find a pace or style that fits your schedule.

INTRODUCTION

As we are invited today to consider what it means to be managers (rather than owners) of all that we have, it is crucial to recall that we are bought with a price. "Christ Jesus, himself human, . . . gave himself a ransom for all." Apart from the generosity of God we have nothing—we are nothing. By God's gracious favor we have everything we need.

DAY ONE: Amos 8:4-7

Amos was called by God to prophesy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Peace and prosperity in Israel led to corrupt business practices and oppression of the poor. The prophet declares that God will not tolerate such a situation.

⁴Hear this, you that trample on the needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,
⁵saying, "When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain;
and the sabbath,
so that we may offer wheat for sale?
We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,
and practice deceit with false balances,
⁶buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
and selling the sweepings of the wheat."
⁷The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

Adventure Challenge: Amos 8.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Read an introduction to or summary of Amos.

Option B: Research any of the terms or references you do not understand such as *the new moon, ephah, shekel, false balances*.

Option C: Forgetting and remembering are key themes in the Bible; use a concordance to see how and how frequently either of these words are used.

DAY TWO: Psalm 113

The psalmist praises the LORD who is enthroned on high, but cares for the lowest.

¹Hallelujah! Give praise, you servants of the LORD;
praise the name of the LORD.
²Let the name of the LORD be blessed,
from this time forth forevermore.
³From the rising of the sun to its going down
let the name of the LORD be praised.
⁴The LORD is high above all nations,
God's glory above the heavens.
⁵Who is like the LORD our God,
who sits enthroned on high,
⁶but stoops to behold
the heavens and the earth?

⁷The LORD takes up the weak out of the dust
and lifts up the poor from the ashes,
⁸enthroning them with the rulers,
with the rulers of the people.
⁹The LORD makes the woman of a childless house
to be a joyful mother of children. Hallelujah!

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 113.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Research “Egyptian Hallel psalms,” the group to which this psalm is traditionally linked.

Option B. Compare this psalm to Psalm 114, another Hallel psalm.

DAY THREE: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

The Pastoral Epistles offer insight into how early Christians understood many practical matters, such as church administration and worship. The church's focused prayer for others is an expression of the single-minded passion God has toward us in Jesus.

¹First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For

there is one God;

there is also one mediator between God and humankind,

Christ Jesus, himself human,

⁶who gave himself a ransom for all

—this was attested at the right time. ⁷For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Adventure Challenge: 1 Timothy 2 - 3

Explorer Challenge: With a dictionary, thesaurus, or other reference tools, research *godliness* and *dignity* -- two qualities that this passage assumes to be characteristics of the Christian life. How do they relate to the recommendations for Christian life in Chapters 2 and 3?

DAY 4: Luke 16:1-13

Jesus tells the curious story of a dishonest man who cheats his employer and then is commended by him for having acted so shrewdly. Jesus wonders why his own followers are less creative and diligent in their stewardship given that they are managers of a far more valuable household.

¹Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.' ³Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' ⁵So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' ⁷Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' ⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

¹⁰Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you

the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Adventure Challenge: Luke 16.

Explorer Challenge: This puzzling parable has prompted much analysis. Use whatever resource tools available to learn about some of these interpretations.

DAY 5:

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God among us, we gather in the name of your Son to learn love for one another. Keep our feet from evil paths. Turn our minds to your wisdom and our hearts to the grace revealed in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; strive side by side for the faith of the gospel. (*Phil. 1:27*)

Adventure Challenge: Following the recommendation of 1 Timothy 2:1-2, offer "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings ... for everyone, ²for kings and all who are in high positions," including candidates or politicians whom you may find disagreeable.