

Bible Challenge June 5 - 11, 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 are 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

The Time after Pentecost is a teaching time, a growing time, in the life of the church. Today's texts celebrate God's ability and intention to provide us with a new lease on life. To that end we gather today with the whole people of God to be instructed by the word and nourished in the blessed sacrament.

DAY ONE: 1 Kings 17:17-24

Having offered hospitality to Elijah, a widow in Zarephath loses her son to an illness. Through prayer, Elijah restores the boy to life, and the joyful mother acknowledges that Elijah is indeed a man of God.

¹⁷After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸She then said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!" ¹⁹But he said to her, "Give me your son." He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging, and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰He cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" ²¹Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." ²²The LORD listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." ²⁴So the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

Adventure Challenge: 1 Kings 17

Explorer Challenge: Elijah is an important figure in the Old Testament. Skim through 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 3 to learn his story. Alternatively, research (through the internet or reference books) what is known about him and his importance.

DAY TWO: Psalm 30.

A song of thanksgiving from one whose security has been shaken and then restored.

¹I will exalt you, O LORD, because you have lifted me up
and have not let my enemies triumph over me.

²O LORD my God, I cried out to you,
and you restored me to health.

³You brought me up, O LORD, from the dead;
you restored my life as I was going down to the grave.

⁴Sing praise to the LORD, all you faithful;
give thanks in holy remembrance.

⁵God's wrath is short; God's favor lasts a lifetime.

Weeping spends the night, but joy comes in the morning.
⁶While I felt secure, I said,
 "I shall never be disturbed."
⁷You, LORD, with your favor, made me as strong as the mountains."
 Then you hid your face, and I was filled with fear.
⁸I cried to you, O LORD;
 I pleaded with my Lord, saying,
⁹"What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit?
 Will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?"
¹⁰Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me;
 O LORD, be my helper."
¹¹You have turned my wailing into dancing;
 you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.
¹²Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing;
 O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever.

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 30.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A.* Research Sheol and the Pit.

Option B. Find at least one other translation of this Psalm or find music, poetry, or art based on this psalm.

DAY THREE: Galatians 1:11-24

The apostle and church-planter Paul tells the story of his ministry given to him by Jesus Christ. In the midst of grave tension in his church in Galatia, he assures his congregation that his work is centered in the pure gospel of Jesus Christ, unlike the other teachers among them.

¹¹For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; ¹²for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

¹³You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. ¹⁴I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. ¹⁵But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

¹⁸Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; ¹⁹but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. ²⁰In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! ²¹Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, ²²and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; ²³they only heard it said, "The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴And they glorified God because of me.

Adventure Challenge: Galatians 1.

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

Option B. Paul briefly summarizes his religious experience; use a standard reference to

research what facts are known about Paul's life.

DAY FOUR: Luke 7:11-17

Jesus' ministry bears witness to God's coming reign, where the lowly are shown mercy and the dead are raised. Here, Jesus ministers to a widow by raising her only son to life.

¹¹Soon afterwards [Jesus] went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹²As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. ¹³When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. ¹⁶Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people!" ¹⁷This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

Adventure Challenge: Luke 7.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A.* Compare this story with the story about Elisha, the first reading for this week. What elements are the same; what are different?

Option B. Some details in this story have significance for Jewish traditions: for example, the only son of a widow, a touching the bier, and a great prophet has arisen. Using a commentary or other research tools, explore the details of this story.

DAY FIVE:

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Compassionate God, you have assured the human family of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Deliver us from the death of sin, and raise us to new life in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

A great prophet has risen among us! God has looked favorably on us! (*Luke 7:16*)