

Bible Challenge June 25- July 02, 2017

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

Jeremiah knew the frustration of having his words rejected. Jesus declares that his words may not bring peace, but division. In baptism we are buried with Christ that we may walk in newness of life. As we take stands for the sake of justice and lose our lives for the sake of others, we need not be afraid. The hairs of our head are counted. In baptism we are marked with the cross of Christ forever.

DAY ONE: Jeremiah 20:7-13

Jeremiah accuses God of forcing him into a ministry that brings him only contempt and persecution. Yet Jeremiah is confident that God will be a strong protector against his enemies and commits his life into God's hands.

⁷O LORD, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me. ⁸For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. ⁹If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. ¹⁰For I hear many whispering: "Terror is all around! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" All my close friends are watching for me to stumble. "Perhaps he can be enticed, and we can prevail against him, and take our revenge on him." ¹¹But the LORD is with me like a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. ¹²O LORD of hosts, you test the righteous, you see the heart and the mind; let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have committed my cause. ¹³Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.

Adventure Challenge: Jeremiah 20.

Explorer Challenge: Option A: Research Jeremiah: who was he? why did he face resistance to his prophesy? **Option B:** This lament has been called "the most blasphemous in the Bible"; consult commentaries to find out why. (The key is the double meaning for the word translated *enticed* in verses 7 and 10.)

DAY TWO: Psalm 69:7-10 [11-15] 16-18

Suffering shame and reproach, the Psalmist calls out, "Answer me, O LORD, for your love is kind."

⁷Surely, for your sake I have suffered reproach,
and shame has covered my face.
⁸I have become a stranger to my own kindred,
an alien to my mother's children.
⁹Zeal for your house has eaten me up;
the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.
¹⁰I humbled myself with fasting,
but that was turned to my reproach.
[¹¹I put on sackcloth also,
and became a by-word among them.
¹²Those who sit at the gate murmur against me,
and the drunkards make songs about me.
¹³But as for me, this is my prayer to you, at the time you have set, O LORD:
"In your great mercy, O God, answer me with your unfailing help.

¹⁴Save me from the mire; do not let me sink;
let me be rescued from those who hate me
and out of the deep waters.
¹⁵Let not the torrent of waters wash over me,
neither let the deep swallow me up;
do not let the pit shut its mouth upon me.]
¹⁶Answer me, O LORD, for your love is kind;
in your great compassion, turn to me.
¹⁷Hide not your face from your servant;
be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.
¹⁸Draw near to me and redeem me;
because of my enemies deliver me.

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 69.

Explorer Challenge: Compare the psalmist's complaint with those of Jeremiah in the reading for Day One. In your Bible-reading experience, how typical are these kinds of complaints?

DAY THREE: Romans 6:1b-11

In baptism we were incorporated into the reality of Christ's death. Our lives in the present are marked and shaped by his crucifixion, just as our lives in the future will be marked and shaped by his resurrection.

^{1b}Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Adventure Challenge: Romans 6.

Explorer Challenge: Read Romans 5, specially 8 – 21 and determine why Paul would ask the question in Romans 6:1.

DAY FOUR: Matthew 10:24-39

Jesus warns his disciples that their ministry in his name will meet with opposition, requiring absolute trust in God and an unswerving commitment to their Lord.

[Jesus said to the twelve:] ²⁴"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! ²⁶So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³²Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. ³⁴Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and one's foes

will be members of one's own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

Adventure Challenge: Matthew 10.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Research *Beelzebul*. *Option B:* By themselves, Jesus' statements in vs. 34-36 are shocking. How does it help to read them in the context of all of chapter 10? In context, does it appear that Jesus is advocating antagonism, "a sword"?

DAY FIVE:

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Teach us, good Lord God, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, except that of knowing that we do your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jesus says, The Spirit of the Lord will testify on my behalf, and you also are to testify. (*John 15:26, 27*)

Adventure Challenge: In today's English, the word *testify* is often used in a legal sense. Research the meanings of this word, and determine which of these meanings best fit the statements in John 15. In practical terms, what is Jesus asking us to do?