

## Bible Challenge July 2- 8, 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

*The welcome of baptism is for all God's children. This baptismal gift sets us free from the power of sin and death. In today's gospel, Christ promises that the disciple who gives a cup of cold water to the little ones serves Christ himself. From worship we are sent on our baptismal mission: to serve the little ones of this world and to be a sign of God's merciful welcome.*

### DAY ONE: Jeremiah 28:5-9

*Through a symbolic action, Jeremiah insisted that Judah and all the surrounding nations should submit to the king of Babylon. Hananiah contradicted Jeremiah, who in reply insisted that Hananiah's rosy prediction should not be believed until it came true. God confirmed the word of Jeremiah and sentenced the false prophet Hananiah to death (vv. 16-17).*

<sup>5</sup>The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD; <sup>6</sup>and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD fulfill the words that you have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. <sup>7</sup>But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. <sup>8</sup>The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. <sup>9</sup>As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet."

**Adventure Challenge:** Jeremiah 28

**Explorer Challenge: Option A:** Read an introduction to Jeremiah or research his life and writings. **Option**

**B:** Re-read last week's reading, Jeremiah 20:7-13, and consider how the two readings relate to each other.

**Option C:** Jeremiah indicates (verse 8) that prophets warn of war, famine and pestilence; is that your experience with prophets? Does that meet the general definition we have of prophets?

### DAY TWO: Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

*Your love, O LORD, forever will I sing. Happy are the people who walk in the light of your presence.*

<sup>1</sup>Your love, O LORD, forever will I sing;

from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.

<sup>2</sup>For I am persuaded that your steadfast love is established forever;

you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.

<sup>3</sup>"I have made a covenant with my chosen one;

I have sworn an oath to David my servant:

<sup>4</sup>I will establish your line forever,

and preserve your throne for all generations."

<sup>15</sup>Happy are the people who know the festal shout!

They walk, O LORD, in the light of your presence.

<sup>16</sup>They rejoice daily in your name;

they are jubilant in your righteousness.

<sup>17</sup>For you are the glory of their strength,

and by your favor our might is exalted.

<sup>18</sup>Truly, our shield belongs to the LORD;

our king to the Holy One of Israel.

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 89.

**Explorer Challenge: Option A:** Four our reading, the church fathers have edited out verses 5 – 14; consider if omitting these verses changes the opening message of this psalm? **Option B:** In Psalm 89, an important change begins with verse 38. What is that change and how do verses 38 – 48 relate to the rest of the psalm, especially verses 19-37?

### **DAY THREE: Romans 6:12-18, 23**

*Sin is an enslaving power that motivates us to live self-serving, disobedient lives. Sin's final payoff is death. We, however, have been set free from sin's slavery to live obediently under God's grace, whose end is the free gift of eternal life.*

<sup>12</sup>Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. <sup>13</sup>No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. <sup>14</sup>For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. <sup>15</sup>What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup>But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, <sup>18</sup>and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. <sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Adventure Challenge:** Romans 6.

**Explorer Challenge:** The word *instruments* (verse 13) can also be translated *weapons*. What other words or images in this passage imply military-like order and control?

### **DAY FOUR: Matthew 10:40-42**

*When Jesus sends his disciples out as missionaries, he warns them of persecution and hardships they will face. He also promises to reward any who aid his followers and support their ministry.*

[Jesus said to the twelve:] <sup>40</sup>"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup>Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; <sup>42</sup>and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

**Adventure Challenge:** Matthew 10. (This is a repeat of last week.)

**Explorer Challenge: Option A:** This passage concludes a set of instructions that we began two weeks ago. Re-read Matthew 10 and see how this reading is a balance to what has just come before it. **Option B:** Read 10: 32 to learn what Jesus may have understood to be a prophet's reward; read 13:43 and 25:34-40 to learn the reward of the righteous.

### **DAY FIVE:**

#### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

O God, you direct our lives by your grace, and your words of justice and mercy reshape the world. Mold us into a people who welcome your word and serve one another, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

#### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (*1 Peter 2:9*)

**Adventure Challenge:** The Prayer of the Day proclaims that God's "words of justice and mercy reshape the world." Consider what this phrase means: can you visualize this message or think of a story or incident that

illustrates this idea.

**Explorer Challenge:** Consider how the Day One and Day Two readings apply to or explain the Gospel Acclamation that we are *chosen to proclaim God's mighty acts*.