

## Bible Challenge August 6-12, 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

*In the Day One reading, God invites all who are hungry or thirsty to receive food and drink without cost. In the Day Four reading, Jesus feeds the hungry multitude and reveals the abundance of God. At the eucharistic table we remember all who are hungry or poor in our world today. As we share the bread of life, we are sent forth to give ourselves away as bread for the hungry.*

### DAY ONE: Isaiah 55:1-5

*God invites Israel to a great feast at which both food and drink are free. God also promises to make an everlasting covenant with all the people, with promises that previously had been limited to the line of kings. As David was a witness to the nations, these nations shall now acknowledge the ways in which God has glorified Israel.*

<sup>1</sup>Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. <sup>2</sup>Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. <sup>3</sup>Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. <sup>4</sup>See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. <sup>5</sup>See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 55 (The whole psalm is a moving invitation to renewal.)

**Explorer Challenge:** Scholars believe his invitation was written to Jews who were living in the Babylonian exile. What do you know about this historical context and how does that context add to the meaning of this passage and to the whole psalm?

### DAY TWO: Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21

*Lord, Your compassion is over all your works; You are righteous in all your ways.*

<sup>8</sup>The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

<sup>9</sup>LORD, you are good to all,  
and your compassion is over all your works.

<sup>14</sup>The Lord upholds all those who fall  
and lifts up those who are bowed down.

<sup>15</sup>The eyes of all wait upon you, O LORD,  
and you give them their food in due season.

<sup>16</sup>You open wide your hand  
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

<sup>17</sup>You are righteous in all your ways  
and loving in all your works.

<sup>18</sup>You are near to all who call upon you,  
to all who call upon you faithfully.

<sup>19</sup>You fulfill the desire of those who fear you;  
you hear their cry and save them.

<sup>20</sup>You watch over all those who love you,  
but all the wicked you shall destroy.

<sup>21</sup>My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD;  
let all flesh bless God's holy name forever and ever.

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 145.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Learn what is an alphabetic acrostic psalm. *Option B.* Note how often the words *all* and *every* occur; consider if each instance is literal or figurative. *Option C.* Research *universalism*; a concept this psalm seems to embrace.

### **DAY THREE: Romans 9:1-5**

*This begins a new section in Paul's letter in which he will deal with the place of Israel in God's saving plan. He opens by highlighting how Israel's heritage and legacy include being God's children, having God's covenants, being given God's law, participating in worship of God, and receiving divine promises.*

<sup>1</sup>I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit—<sup>2</sup>I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup>They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; <sup>5</sup>to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

**Adventure Challenge:** Romans 9.

**Explorer Challenge:** Re-read the Day Two passage as a context for Paul's discussion in Roman's 9 – 11 on God's relationship to Israel.

### **DAY FOUR: Matthew 14:13-21**

*After John the Baptist is murdered, Jesus desires a time of solitude. Still, his compassion for others will not allow him to dismiss those who need him, and he is moved to perform one of his greatest miracles.*

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus heard [about the beheading of John the Baptist,] he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup>When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. <sup>15</sup>When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." <sup>17</sup>They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." <sup>18</sup>And he said, "Bring them here to me." <sup>19</sup>Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup>And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. <sup>21</sup>And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

**Adventure Challenge:** Matthew 14:1-21 (or all of Matthew 14).

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Compare this passage with Mark 6:32-44 and Luke 9:10-17. *Option B.* Read 1 Kings 17:8-16 and 2 Kings 4:42-44 to gain a sense of the context early Jewish Christians might had for this story,

### **DAY FIVE:**

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

Glorious God, your generosity waters the world with goodness, and you cover creation with abundance. Awaken in us a hunger for the food that satisfies both body and spirit, and with this food fill all the starving world; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. (*Matt. 4:4*)

**Challenge:** Think of examples of food or drink that you found really satisfying. Was it the quality, the quantity, or the level of your hunger? Can you find parallels with spiritual food? When or why is some spiritual food really satisfying? Then, review the Prayer of the Day.