

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #73

READING I Isaiah 58:7-10

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Thus says the LORD:

**Share your bread with the hungry,
shelter the oppressed and the homeless,
clothe the naked when you see them,
and do not turn your back on your own.**
Then your **light** shall break forth like the dawn,
and your wound shall **quickly** be **healed**;
your **vindication** shall go **before** you,
and the **glory** of the LORD shall be your **rear guard**.
Then you shall **call**, and the LORD will **answer**;
you shall cry for **help**, and he will say: **Here I am!**
If you **remove** from your **midst**
oppression, false accusation and malicious speech;
if you **bestow** your **bread** on the **hungry**
and **satisfy the afflicted**;
then **light** shall **rise** for you in the **darkness**,
and the **gloom** shall **become** for you like **midday**.

Isaiah = ī-ZAY-uh

This highly poetic reading is in the imperative voice. God is speaking forcefully to the people through Isaiah. Use this to guide your proclamation.

Emphasis on "light."

Equal emphasis on all the things to be removed: "oppression," "false accusation," and "malicious speech."

READING I Today's reading comes from the third major section of the Book of Isaiah. This portion of Isaiah differs from the first two sections in that it is addressed to the Israelites who have returned from exile in Babylon and are now charged with the responsibility of building a new nation. Isaiah likens this restored generation to a light that will shine forth for other nations to behold.

While it is clear that political and military concerns will be on the minds of those attempting to rebuild their nation, Isaiah pays particular attention to their treatment

of the poor. It is important to locate this reading within the larger framework of the chapter, which focuses on fasting and the need to avoid empty ritualism. Isaiah wants the people to understand that their fasting will be of little consequence if they do not feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, and clothe the naked. These and other acts of compassion will serve to scatter the darkness and reflect the light of God's love.

Moreover, not only will light emanate from Israel, but when their compassion is demonstrated and their underlying spirit of goodness is manifested, then God's glory

will guard them. The prophet speaks of the people being vindicated. As we read these words, we call to mind how God has protected his people in the past. For example, consider how the ancient Israelites were vindicated at the Red Sea with God's angel leading the people in cloud by day and in fire by night. In today's reading, we hear Isaiah prophecy, "your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard." For Isaiah, attention to the poor and the oppressed will be like a key that opens the door to success for the former refugees. He envisions the return to

For meditation and context:

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

The energy of this reading relies on the accumulation of negatives—negative attributes as well as things Paul claims he did not do. And these accumulate right up to the concluding line of the reading, when the “power of God” bursts forth in a positive shower.

sublimity = suhb-LIM-ih-tee

TO KEEP IN MIND

Pause to break up separate thoughts, set apart significant statements, or indicate major shifts. Never pause in the middle of a thought. Your primary guide for pauses is punctuation.

the Promised Land as a renewal of the covenant that summons the people to act as God has acted toward them.

READING II

One of Paul’s major reasons for writing to the Corinthians was to combat the influence of those who considered themselves spiritually sophisticated. Within the Corinthian Church there were some who took on an air of elitism, believing that the way of Christ constituted the attainment of wisdom. Very similar to their gnostic counterparts among the pagans, these Christians

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 112:4–5, 6–7, 8–9 (4a)

R. The just man is a light in darkness to the upright.

or

R. Alleluia.

Light shines through the darkness for
the upright;
he is gracious and merciful and just.
Well for the man who is gracious and lends,
who conducts his affairs with justice.

His heart is steadfast; he shall not fear.
Lavishly he gives to the poor;
his justice shall endure forever;
his horn shall be exalted in glory.

He shall never be moved;
the just one shall be in everlasting
remembrance.
An evil report he shall not fear;
his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.

READING II 1 Corinthians 2:1–5

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

When I came to you, **brothers and sisters,**
proclaiming the mystery of God,
I did not come with **sublimity** of words or of wisdom.
For I **resolved** to know nothing while I was with you
except **Jesus Christ, and him crucified.**
I came to you in **weakness and fear and much trembling,**
and my **message** and my **proclamation**
were **not** with persuasive words of wisdom,
but with a **demonstration** of Spirit and power,
so that your **faith** might rest **not** on human wisdom
but on the **power of God.**

believed that wisdom separated them from the cares and concerns of the world.

Thus, Paul wants to be perfectly clear near the beginning of his letter that he does not align himself with this group of elitists. His wisdom alone is that of Christ crucified, which he has just called a “stumbling block” and “foolishness” to the Jews and the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23). Paul goes so far as to suggest that this message was all that he could offer the Corinthians during his time among them. Thus, they should not expect his message to be any different now. He admits to them that

although he came to them “in weakness and fear and much trembling,” his message proved to be powerful and true. It may not have been full of worldly wisdom, but it demonstrated the power and wisdom of God.

Paul’s introduction of himself to the Corinthians in this passage is in keeping with a plan that appears in other letters written by him. In playing down his own power and authority, Paul seeks to win the listening ear of his audience for Christ alone. In speaking of himself as weak and fearful, his humility attracts the attention of the

GOSPEL Matthew 5:13–16

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew**Jesus said to his disciples:****“You are the salt of the earth.****But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?****It is no longer good for anything****but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.****You are the light of the world.****A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.****Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket;****it is set on a lampstand,****where it gives light to all in the house.****Just so, your light must shine before others,****that they may see your good deeds****and glorify your heavenly Father.”**

This reading begins with a truly mysterious question. Slow your pace in these opening lines.

Express this characterization as sincerely as you can.

Give special emphasis to this line, with special emphasis on “light” and “shine.”

Corinthians. Paul knows that it will not be an easy task to challenge the attitude of the spiritually elite in Corinth, and thus, he must make clear from the outset that God’s grace prevails over human wisdom and action.

GOSPEL In hearing today’s short Gospel reading, which continues Jesus’ preaching that began last week in the Sermon on the Mount, we recall the theme of light which is present in today’s first reading: when people act with justice for the oppressed, then their light

shines in the darkness. In today’s Gospel, Jesus refers to those who follow him as both salt and light.

While salt serves as a preservative and gives flavor to food, light illumines and allows clearer perception of the world. This passage immediately follows the beatitudes, in which Jesus calls “blessed” those who act with compassion and justice. Bringing these passages together forms a picture of discipleship: disciples of Jesus bring clarity into a darkened world by providing a vision revealed in selflessness. Furthermore, Jesus emphasizes that disci-

ples will only be able to make a difference in the world if they use their gifts. Otherwise, they will be as useless as salt that has lost its taste and light that is hidden away.

The Gospel reading ends with Jesus cautioning his followers to avoid allowing their accomplishments to be a source of personal pride. Good deeds must always be done for the sake of others, and ultimately, all works of discipleship glorify God’s name, not one’s own. S.W.