

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTONARY # 125

READING I Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy

Moses said to the people:

"Now, Israel, hear the statutes and decrees

which I am teaching you to observe,

that you may live, and may enter in and take possession

of the land

which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

In your observance of the commandments of the LORD,

your God,

which I enjoin upon you,

you shall not add to what I command you nor subtract from it.

Observe them carefully,

for thus will you give evidence

of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations,

who will hear of all these statutes and say,

'This great nation is truly a wise and intelligent people;'

For what great nation is there

that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God, is to us

whenever we call upon him;

Or what great nation has statutes and decrees

that are as just as this whole law

which I am setting before you today?"

with them would undermine the message they communicate to the world, namely, that the God of Israel abides with the chosen people. Second, they are to diligently keep God's laws. To do so will imbue them with the Lord's wisdom and show the nation's wisdom to the whole world. If the people actually follow the law of God, not only will the nations of the world come to know their wisdom and, through them, God's wisdom, but also foreign nations will be able to perceive the intimate bond that the Lord forges with the chosen people through the law. A corollary here is that,

by following the law, Israel will enjoy the assurance of a close relationship with the Lord. Put differently, to keep the law given by God is to remain engaged in the intimate relationship that God desires and fosters with the people by virtue of giving the law. Unfortunately, despite their best efforts, Moses' comments eventually show that keeping the law exceeds the people's ability. The Lord's law will need to become incarnate (in the person of Jesus) in order for it to be entirely kept and fulfilled.

Deuteronomy = dō-ter-AH-nuh-mee
or dyō-ter-AH-nuh-mee

statutes = STACH-gōts

Emphasize "hear," Moses' exhortative
language reveals the significance of
the proclamation.

The commandments do not need editing.
Divine revelation is just that: divine.

Make sure to contrast the plural "gods" with
the singular "God."

Conclude with an upbeat tone. The law is
a gift, not a burden.

READING I

Highlighting the theme of wisdom and its connection with God's law, Deuteronomy presents Moses, the divinely sanctioned lawgiver, as a commentator on God's laws. In this discourse given at the end of his life, Moses provides some final instruction to the people before he goes the way of all flesh. He who once heard and received the laws from God on the people's behalf now highlights what it means for them to follow those laws. First, he notes that, due to their divine origin, these laws are not to be altered. Expanding on them or doing away

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 4-5 (1a)

R. The one who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Whoever walks blamelessly and does justice; by whom the reprobate is despised, while he honors those who fear the Lord. Who lends not his money at usury and accepts no bribe against the innocent. Who takes up a reproach against his neighbor; who harms not his fellow man, and slanders not with his tongue. Who thinks the truth in his heart and does not bear fruit. Reception of the word, give life. It is like a seed planted in the soul that can bear fruit.

Announce the name of the book clearly. This is the first of multiple weeks we will hear from James. This is an exhortatory text on ethical conduct, yet there is an underlying joy in the acknowledgement that all our gifts come from God.

Deception happens when what you say and do don't align. Ask yourself: if you are not a "doer of the word," have you really heard it?

Humblly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

GOSPEL Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus,

READING II

This Sunday, we begin reading the letter of James, who was probably a relative of Jesus, the first leader of the church in Jerusalem, and martyred in the early 60s. According to James 1:1, the audience is "the twelve tribes in the dispersion," which refers to Jews outside of first-century Roman Palestine. Generally speaking, this text repeatedly exhorts its audience to live morally upright lives, especially through various practical means. Only its initial greeting suggests that it is a letter. A better category for James might be wisdom literature.

This Sunday's passage begins by focusing on gift-giving. James associates cal deeds: caring for orphans and widows and remaining "unstained by the world," in this turn of phrase, James uses stereotypical biblical categories to call his audience to care for any and all who experience needs due to social inequity. He equates actions that care for those in need with true religion. Thus, the one who seeks life through the power of the word seeks to care for those overburdened by social injustice. This Sunday's passage begins by focusing on gift-giving. James associates cal deeds: caring for orphans and widows and remaining "unstained by the world," in this turn of phrase, James uses stereotypical biblical categories to call his audience to care for any and all who experience needs due to social inequity. He equates actions that care for those in need with true religion. Thus, the one who seeks life through the power of the word seeks to care for those overburdened by social injustice.

they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with **unclean**, that is, unwashed, hands.

—For the Pharisees and, in fact, **all Jews**,

do **not** eat without **carefully** washing their hands,

keeping the **tradition** of the elders.

And on coming from the marketplace

they do not eat without **purifying** themselves.

And there are many other things that they have

traditionally **observed**,

the **purification** of cups and jugs and kettles and beds.—

So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him,

“**Why** do your disciples not **follow** the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with **unclean** hands?”

He responded,

“Well did **Isaiah** prophesy about you **hypocrites**, as it

is written:

This people honors me with their lips,

but their hearts are far from me;

in vain do they worship me,

teaching as doctrines human precepts.

You **disregard** God’s **commandment** but cling to

human tradition.”

He summoned the crowd **again** and said to them,

“**Hear** me, all of you, and understand.

Nothing that enters one from **outside** can **defile** that person; but the things that come out from **within** are what defile.

“From **within** people, from their hearts,

come evil thoughts, **unchastity, theft, murder,**

adultery, greed, malice, deceit,

licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly.”

All these evils come from **within** and they defile.”

Jesus cites the prophet Isaiah to explain that their ritual cleansing practices are human innovations, explicitly forbidden by Moses in today’s first reading. Jesus then gathers the local Galilean crowd to teach them what it truly means to keep one’s sanctity undefiled. As Jesus explains, defilement is not about what we take in from the outside world. Rather, a list of vices shows clearly that defilement comes out from within. So, we do well to ask, what are we putting out into the world? E.W.

by laws that differed from their own God-given laws. Customary ritual washing set them apart, which seemingly sanctified them. In other words, these rituals were thought of as ways to keep the law of Moses and live wisely, objectives outlined in today’s first two readings.

Therefore, when the Jerusalemites observe Jesus’ disciples eating without ritual washing up, they are surprised. How can a righteous teacher permit his disciples to relinquish customs that seem to assure sanctity and the keeping of the law? The question occasions a strong response.

As we return to the Gospel of Mark today, we see Jesus facing a new audience: Pharisees from Jerusalem. Up to this point he has been addressing fellow Galilean Jews. Similar to the Bread of Life Discourse in John 6 (which we have heard from the last few Sundays), Jesus’ audience resists his teaching. Mark reports that they were accustomed to various cleansing rituals in their everyday lives, especially ritual hand-washing. Such rituals had their logic. They aimed at keeping the Jewish people pure and holy amid a world that was governed

GOSPEL

Read the list slowly so the assembly can take to heart the actions and attitudes that should be avoided. It is almost like an examination of conscience.

Pause after “tradition.” Jesus turns his attention away from the scribes and Pharisees and back to the crowds. Use an authoritative tone. Jesus wants to clarify an important point.

Read this slowly and with sadness. Jesus laments those who are far from God.

Jesus wants the Pharisees to move beyond a legalistic understanding of God’s law. Read their questions with an accusatory tone. This would explain Jesus’ abrupt answer.