Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Sunday Mass Study Notes for Lectionary 668: 11/02/2025



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for 11-2-2014. This week we open with the second reading from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans where we learn about the hope given to us through Jesus Christ. Then we conclude with the Gospel lesson from Saint John in which we learn how those that hold saving faith in the Lord Jesus can never be separated from His love.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from the Apocryphal Book of Wisdom.

First Reading:

Wisdom 3:1-9
The souls of the just are in the hand of God,
and no torment shall touch them.
They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead;
and their passing away was thought an affliction
and their going forth from us, utter destruction.
But they are in peace.
For if before men, indeed, they be punished,
yet is their hope full of immortality;
chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed,
because God tried them
and found them worthy of himself.
As gold in the furnace, he proved them,
and as sacrificial offerings he took them to himself.
In the time of their visitation they shall shine,
and shall dart about as sparks through stubble;
they shall judge nations and rule over peoples,
and the Lord shall be their King forever.
Those who trust in him shall understand truth,
and the faithful shall abide with him in love:
because grace and mercy are with his holy ones,
and his care is with his elect.

In this reading, we see how, even though God allows trials in the lives of believers, He will deliver them in the end. Unlike "sparks through the stubble," which ultimately burn up and turn into nothing but dust, the "faithful shall abide with him in love." We will see something almost exactly like this in today's Gospel reading.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from the fifth chapter of Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans. The big idea of this chapter is that although death came through Adam's sin, life and hope came through Jesus Christ. Chapter 5 opens with the adverb "therefore," a word that means a logical consequence. When we see this word, we must ask, "What is it there for"? In this case, the word provides a link to the previous chapter. Paul explained in detail in chapter 4 how Abraham was justified by his faith and not by his works. Paul cautioned the Romans that anyone who thought they would be justified before God because of their works was incorrect. Works flow out of a believer who has been justified

by faith. Paul said, "Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:4-5). Though Abraham's works were mighty, they were not the reason he was justified before God (Romans 4:2). Justification is a theological concept that God forgave his sin as if he had never sinned. Paul quoted from the Old Testament Book of Genesis. He said, "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Romans 4:3). God imputed His righteousness to Abraham because of his faith in God's promises (Romans 4:22). This promise extends to all who trust in the Lord Jesus. Paul continued, "Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead"(Romans 4:23-24). Paul reemphasized this in his letter to the Ephesians, saying, "8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The verses before today's reading provide more important contextual information. Can you imagine going to Mass and hearing the readings without ever understanding the context again? This section, beginning with the "therefore" we just discussed, introduces the concept of hope that will be important during the reading we look at later. Merriam-Webster defines hope as "to cherish a desire with anticipation, as in 'hopes for a promotion.'" Read the introductory verses of chapter 5 and discover how hope comes about in the life of a believer.

> *1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; (Romans 5:1-4)*

We know that as Christians we are justified before God, meaning that we stand before Him with our sins forgiven "just as if we have never sinned" (v. 1). God has put our sins as far as east is from west and remembers them no more (Psalm 103:12). We stand in our belief through God's grace (v. 2a) and "exalt in hope of the glory of God" (v. 2b). We don't relish any other hope, but that of both seeing in the future and experiencing in the present the active work of the glory of God in our lives. This is how we can persevere through tribulation (v. 3), which then brings about "proven character" (v. 4a), which finally leads to hope (v. 4b). In summary, we first exalt in hope of the glory of God, God allows tribulation to give us perseverance that leads to proven character and finally hope for our own souls.

Therefore, with all of these things in mind, such as how a believer is counted worthy before the eyes of God on judgment day, let us proceed to the reading.

Second Reading:

> *5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Romans 5:5-11)*

Hope comes from God working through our trials to produce godly character. When we finally receive hope from God through our perseverance and subsequent godly character, this hope "does not disappoint" (v. 5a) "because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (v. 5b-ff). If this weren't enough, the mystery of all of this is that "while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (v. 6). However, "one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (vv. 7-8). Contemplate this moment: Christ, who knew that we would sin in the future, died for us on the cross 2,000 years ago, knowing us and willingly bearing the penalty of our sins for us. Paul continues, saying that not only have we **been** forgiven by Jesus' past, once for all work on the cross, but we are also **being** saved from the future wrath of God through Christ's actions (v. 10). We were reconciled with God (v. 10), or made right with Him, through the blood of Jesus Christ. Finally, we can "also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (v. 11). God's active acts of sanctification in our lives in an already, not yet sense are the heart of the Christian life. Imagine the mystery of it all once again. "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; perhaps for the good man, someone would dare even die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (vv. 6-8). How can we not just praise God for what He has done!

Hope is something possessed by true believers in Jesus Christ. In contrast, have you ever known anyone who lived year after year in a hopeless state after losing his or her longtime spouse? If such a person doesn't have a living faith in the Lord Jesus, they can be the picture of hopelessness. I know such a person, and without knowing it, their spouse was the one who gave them hope for living. Once they passed away, the source of hope was gone, and the person who remained living lapsed into an extended state of hopelessness. Each time I read about and contemplate the hope that I have in the Lord Jesus, I think of this man whose wife left him behind without hope. Others can give us joy and temporal hope, but the Scripture is clear that the only source of eternal hope is in God. How many of us unknowingly place our hope in the hands of another person rather than in the Lord God Almighty? Would you please say a quick prayer for this man, that God would open his heart to receiving the truth of the Good News of the Gospel?

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

As we move on to the Gospel lesson from Saint John, we will see the promise and assurance from God to Jesus that anyone who believes in Him will not suffer the wrath of God, as we saw in the first reading. The context is after Jesus' feeding of the five thousand along the shores of the Sea of Galilee (John 6:1-14). Afterwards, the people were about to take Jesus by force and make Him their King (John 6:15). Jesus fled from them and separated Himself from His disciples. Later that night, the disciples found Jesus walking on the water (John 6:19). The crowd clamored after Jesus, wanting more of the material blessing (in this case, bread) but not necessarily wanting the commitment to follow Him for their spiritual needs.

Gospel Reading:

> *37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:37-40)*

Jesus explains here what true faith is: believing in Jesus. The bottom line is that those who hold saving faith in the Lord Jesus can never be separated from His love. In His foreknowledge, God

knows who will come to Him in faith. Those that do come to Him will never be separated from God and they will be raised up with an eternal body on the "last day" (v. 40). The faith of a believer is given to them as a gift (Ephesians 2:8-9).On the other hand, those who do not believe will not be raised up on the last day and will instead suffer the eternal wrath of God. It is a mystery of God but a condition of the fallen world that some people come to believe in Jesus and be rescued from God's promised wrath, while others persist in their unbelief and suffer damnation in hell. It may not be politically correct to say this, but it is God's truth. God calls us to minister to those who don't believe, and to bring the knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ, without which no one comes to the Father (John 14:6).

These verses can challenge us to consider whether we are like the crowd. First, do we only want Jesus for material benefit, or are we true believers trusting that Jesus will raise us up on the last day? If the answer is the latter, then these verses provide much comfort, knowing that we cannot lose our salvation. If the answer is the former, take some time to confess to God the Father your desire to be a true believer in Jesus Christ.

Saint Paul also discussed how believers could never be separated from the love of God.

> *35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)*

We can persevere through our tribulations and hope from God while never being separated from the love that is in Jesus Christ (v. 35). As you go through this week, remember to pray for and even to reach out to those who don't have the hope that you hold onto through your faith in Jesus Christ.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

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1. How is God's hope (as discussed in Romans 5) different from the hope the world provides? How have you experienced God's hope in your own life?

2. Many who do not understand Christianity claim it is an "exclusive" religion. How do the words in the Gospel reading confirm and counteract this notion? How can you be an ambassador for Christ, dispelling the myth that Christians are judgmental, exclusive, and unloving?
