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

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 8-16-2015



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **8-16-2015**. In the first reading, we look at the Book of Proverbs where we see the concept of wisdom personified. The second reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians and focuses upon the behavior of those enlightened by God through faith in Jesus Christ. We close with a continuation of Jesus' lesson from last week in which Jesus called Himself the "living bread that came down out of heaven" (John 6:51).

Introduction to the First Reading:

The book of Proverbs is full of true, wise sayings about everyday life and relationships. It is similar to poetry in that it often uses figurative language to make its point. Many of the Proverbs were written by King Solomon, considered the wisest man who ever lived. God blessed him with great wisdom and riches, and early in his life he followed God faithfully. Later he sinned against God by marrying many women who followed after false gods. Sadly, Solomon followed their idolatrous ways. These Proverbs however, were given by God and are still a source of great wisdom today.

The Book of Psalms provides us with an insight concerning wisdom. Psalm 119:102-104 says:

I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, For You Yourself have taught me. How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

First Reading:

Proverbs 9:1-6 NAS95 1 Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars; 2 She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; She has also set her table; 3 She has sent out her maidens, she calls From the tops of the heights of the city: 4 "Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks understanding she says, 5 "Come, eat of my food And drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 Forsake your folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding."

In Proverbs Ch. 9, the writer uses personification (giving human traits to a nonhuman object or idea) to describe wisdom. She (Wisdom) has built a strong house, indicating that wisdom gives us a strong and secure place from which to live. She is like the mistress of the house who prepares all good things for us to enjoy and invites us in to freely partake of it. Wisdom is available to us if we will only forsake our foolish ways and come and dine. Since God is the source of all wisdom, the food we must consume to get wisdom is His Word—the Bible.

Believers grow in their knowledge of God by developing a deeper understanding of God's Wisdom as revealed through the Bible. As we move to the second reading, we will see how Saint Paul calls believers to express their wisdom through godly expressions of spiritual songs, hymns and psalms. These are activities which happen during the fellowship of believers in the church and they help us to grow in our knowledge of love of the Lord Jesus.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. It begins with the adverb "therefore" which means we must understand the meaning of the verses immediately before to which Paul is referring.

Second Reading:

Ephesians 5:15-20 NAS95 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

The "therefore" refers to the fact that as believers in the Lord Jesus we are "children of the light" (Ephesians 5:8b-c) who were formerly in darkness (v. 8a). Since we are children of the light, we are to produce fruit in keeping with the light, "for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (v. 9). Though we live in evil times (days, v. 16b) we are called as believers to be good stewards of the light that we have through our knowledge of God's word in the Bible. Our understanding of the Bible is how we know God's will (v. 17b). We must let worldly things like wine get in the way of our walking in the truth of the Lord (v. 18), for being drunk is the behavior of the

sin darkened unbelievers. One of the ways in which we can express our love for God and also to grow in the knowledge of Him is through "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (v. 19). God also calls us to be thankful for the things that God has bestowed upon us (v. 20).

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

In the Gospel reading, we continue the discourse that Jesus had with the crowds concerning his teaching as He being the "bread which came down from heaven." The people to whom Jesus was speaking were misunderstanding both the nature of the Messiah as well as to His identity as the One to whom they were listening.

Gospel Reading:

John 6:51-58 NAS95 51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." 52 Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."

Once again we return to the chapter where Jesus refers to himself by a spiritual metaphor—the bread of life. Many people were following Jesus. They saw his miracles, and they were excited about what Jesus had done and curious about what Jesus would do next. They wanted to be part of his entourage. But was that enough of a commitment to call themselves true Christians? Jesus is going to shock the crowd with a stunning metaphor, designed to separate the curious from the true disciples: *"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:54).* As bread gives life through its nourishment, so Jesus gives life to all who believe in Him. Bread provides its physical benefit, not when it is sitting on the table but when it is taken into the body. Jesus provides his spiritual benefits not to the followers who are merely curious but to those who make a full commitment to Him from the heart. Romans 10:9 says, "*If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*." Eating in this case is not physical consumption but belief from the heart that provides the spiritual benefit of eternal life.

Many could not understand the spiritual nature of Jesus' words. They missed the metaphors, and His talk of eating flesh and drinking blood was offensive to them. They demonstrated the principle that the words of Jesus cannot be understood through human wisdom alone, and no one can come to Jesus unless the Father grants it (v. 65). These disciples, blinded by their own sin, walked away and

no longer followed Him. As Jesus continued His teaching, He began to move deeply in the hearts of the crowd causing them to move closer to the point of decision that we will see next week in John 6:66. In the reading today Jesus once again used the "I am" phrase, something which His hearers would have understood as a claim to divinity. Jesus told the crowd at least one year before His final Passover meal at what we call the "Last Supper" that it wasn't the bread that would save them, but rather their belief in Him. The manna in the Exodus was something created divinely by God which fell from the sky at night for the Hebrews to collect each day (except on the Sabbath). Even though this special "bread" came directly from God, those that ate this physical provision from God still died physically (v. 58b). In contrast, those that "feed" upon Jesus are the ones that believe in Him as the Messiah, which is the only way to eternal life (John 14:6). If we read a few verses later in this section, Jesus explained the spiritual analogy He was using by calling Himself the bread of God. He said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). The people misunderstood His spiritual metaphor and stumbled upon His identity as the one and only Messiah of God. The Jews evidently understood that they were prohibited by the Law from the drinking blood. Leviticus says, "You shall not eat anything with the blood" (Leviticus 19:26a). This prohibition from a blood meal was repeated in the New Testament so as not to create a stumbling point with the early Jewish believers. The proclamation in the Book of Acts reads, "that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell" (Acts 15:29). The practice of consuming blood would have been deeply offensive to the Jews because of their immersion in the teachings of the Mosaic Law. Jesus, aware of the legalistic Pharisees in the crowd, used this metaphor to further deepen the divide that existed between the true and false followers of God.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. Describe in what ways Jesus was truly wisdom personified, taking into account the relationship between the words of Jesus in the Bible and the person of Jesus?

2. The Gospel reading followed a series of miracles that Jesus performed for the crowd including the multiplying of the loaves and fishes. Yet we know that many of the people in the crowd did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah (John 6:66). What miracles from Jesus have you experienced in your own life? Why are your experiences different from the people in the Gospel narrative?

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site:

http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/082315.cfm

Source(s):

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Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 5-31-2015



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **5-31-2015**. Our first reading is from one of the first five books of Bible, often referred to as the Books of the Law. The second reading is from the letter of St. Paul to the church in Rome, which explains the basic elements of the gospel. Finally, the reading from St. Matthew includes the final instructions of Jesus to his disciples.

The name Deuteronomy means "second law." In reading Deuteronomy it's helpful to remember that God is not only reminding Israel the law but also of her special place in his love; they are his chosen people. Furthermore, in this repeating of the law given to Moses, God is reminding the nation of their responsibility to live within the sphere of that love. Special privilege (as God's chosen people) always means increased spiritual responsibility.

In this particular passage, God reminds his people of his miraculous care for them up to this point as they journey on to the Promised Land. He has provided for them as for no other people. He delivered them miraculously from slavery in Egypt, and He was delivering them from nations much larger and more powerful than they. He has spoken to them through Moses, and He had disciplined them for their failures, but always to restore them.

God promises his people that if they keep his commandments and obey Him fully, it will go well with them and their children; they will live long in their own land, which He has promised to them "for all time." As you read the passage, reflect on God's special love for those who follow Him.

First Reading

Deuteronomy 4:32-40 NAS95 32 "Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and inquire from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything been done like this great thing, or has anything been heard like it? 33 Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived? 34 Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 35 To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him. 36 Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire. 37 Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, 38 driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in and to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today. 39 Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. 40 So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

As you read the verses from Romans, note the relationship of the Christian to God. It's not an association of fear, as one who is under the bond of slavery. Rather, the person who is "led by the Spirit of God" is considered an adopted son and can rightfully speak of God as his father. What's more, as an adopted son, he is also an heir; he has an unspeakable inheritance (which Paul writes about in his letter to the Ephesians). In fact, the Christian is a co-heir with Christ. All that God has planned for Jesus, who obeyed the Father even to His death and resurrection, will be shared with his adopted brothers.

There is a word of caution, however. Paul writes that the Christina may suffer with Christ and later be glorified with Him. If our faith in Jesus is genuine, we will be willing to suffer for Him, not to earn salvation in any way, because He has paid the full price for that, but to demonstrate our love, obedience, and loyalty to Him.

Second Reading

Romans 8:14-17 NAS95 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,

if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

The question of obedience is also mentioned in the Gospel reading. In these few verses, we hear Jesus making His final appeal to his disciples, giving them instructions, clearly stating what his purpose is for them—and, by extension—for his people today, too.

To settle the doubts of some, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that He has all necessary authority to commission them, and, what's more, He assures them of his presence with them throughout the future. He had promised (especially in John's Gospel) that He would send his Holy Spirit to lead, teach, and counsel them in his absence. Sandwiched between the statement of his authority and the promise of his presence is the distinct purpose which He has for his followers on earth.

We are to make disciples, that is, we are to take the gospel message to the world and encourage them to put their faith in the Son of God who sacrificed his life to pay the penalty for mankind's sin. The evidence of that believing faith is baptism into the name of the triune God. But there's something beyond faith and baptism. We are to teach new disciples "to observe (or obey) all" of Christ's commands. That's a lot to think about isn't it? Note the Gospel reading carefully.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 28:16-20 NAS95 16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. The Law of God is very far reaching. How do I stack up when I compare my life with the 10 Commandments?

2. Do I have fear about my spiritual condition or do I have confidence that I am an adopted son of God? List two ways in which I am being led by God's Holy Spirit?

3. Am I a true disciple of Jesus? List at least one way in which I am seeking to make other disciples, and teaching them to obey Jesus in all things?

Readings for the Week

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http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/053115.cfm

First Reading DT 4:32-34, 39-40

Second Reading ROM 8:14-17

Gospel Reading MT 28:16-20

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 4-26-2015



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **4-26-2015**. This week we open with the first reading from Acts 4 in which we see Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone, the One whom the builders rejected. Then we cover the second reading from First John on which we learn more about the nature of a believer whose heart has been changed by God. We conclude with the Gospel lesson from John 10 where we see an illustration that Jesus gave of Himself as our Good Shepherd.

The first reading is from the Book of Acts. The context is just after Peter's sermon given to the

people gathered at the portico of Solomon (Acts 3:11-26) and following the miraculous healing of the man lame from birth (Acts 3:2-11). These events greatly disturbed "the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees" (Acts 4:1) "because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (4:2). At this point, Peter and some of the disciples were taken into custody, most likely protective custody (4:3). The church continued to grow as a result of the preaching and reached a total size of four thousand people (4:4). The next morning Peter and the disciples were presented to a group including the high priest and two others of priestly descent (4:4-6) at which point they asked them, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" (4:7). This led to Peter's response which is covered in the first reading.

First Reading

Acts 4:8-12 NAS95 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead–by this name this man stands here before you in good health. 11 He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Peter explained to the Jewish rulers that the lame man was healed by the miraculous power of Jesus Christ whom they crucified (v. 9). He went on to explain that this Jesus is the Messiah, then quoted from the Bible evidence showing that their rejection of Him was prophesied to occur. Peter quoted from Psalm 118:22 which said, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone." In the context of the audience, the builders who rejected the cornerstone can be seen as the unbelieving Jewish leaders. Finally, Peter combined the teaching from Isaiah 28:16 that said something similar about the cornerstone but added the element of belief in Jesus for salvation. Isaiah, speaking on behalf of God said, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who **believes in it** will not be disturbed" (Isaiah 28:16b, emphasis added). Peter's teaching wasn't new to the disciples because Jesus had Himself taught that the belief in Him was the only way to get to heaven. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). Jesus used the expression "I am" in this passage as a strong statement of His divinity. We will see Jesus' use of this term again in the Gospel lesson.

Peter's bold speech contains some crucially important truths. Faith in Jesus as the Messiah, which fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of the Chief Cornerstone, is the only way to get to heaven. There is no other Person through whom we can gain forgiveness of our sin; this can come through faith in Jesus Christ alone. These truths are just as applicable to the "rulers and elders of the people" (v. 8) as they are to "all the people of Israel" (v. 10) and by application to everyone in the universe.

The free gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9) comes about, as we will see in the second reading, as a result of God's great love for us. The context of this reading from First John is the apostle's teaching on the evidences and nature of true salvation of a believer. John opened Chapter 2 by saying, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4). Keeping the commandments of God is evidence of a heart that has been changed by God. Today's reading opens in Chapter 3 by expanding this teaching to include the special relationship that exists between God and the believer.

Second Reading

1 John 3:1-2 NAS95 1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

John said that believers in Jesus Christ are bestowed with a special relationship with God, that of "children of God" (v. 1). This was in contrast to those who don't know God, whom Jesus called children of their father the devil (John 8:44), something that he said to the very religious Pharisees. Faith in Christ bestows a special relationship on the believer with God, that of sonship (John 1:12; Romans 8:14-17). The person whose heart has been changed by God stands in contrast to the values of the worldly people around us (v. 1d). This was John's point in the previous chapter and one of the main ideas that he continues to bring out in the entirety of this letter.

Besides our present status as children of God, John tells of an additional blessing from God in how as a believer in some future time we will become like Jesus because we will see Jesus with eyes opened and will be freed from our sinful flesh (v. 2). Perhaps we will have some of the same powers that Jesus had, Who was able to walk through walls (John 20:19). Whatever the case, we will possess supernatural powers and freedom in our glorified bodies (Romans 8:18). Paul describes our current bodies as perishable, dishonorable, and weak, all due to sin (1 Corinthians 15:42-53). However, our imperishable bodies will be perfect, like Jesus, and unhindered by sin. For this we have only God to thank. "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (v. 1).

John's teaching here brings out the reality of our redeemed standing in God. We do not have to perform to get Him to love us. Instead, because we belong to Him as a child of God, we learn how to walk in a way that is consistent with our new identity. The world will not know what to do with us, for we will exhibit the fruit of God's Spirit within us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Opposition, persecution, and being looked down on for our faith is just an opportunity for God to display His nature in us. If these things do not fully characterize our daily lives, we can pray for God to continue His work in us as His children to help us to live in light of our true identity.

As we transition to the Gospel reading, we must remember the raucous caused by Peter as he healed the man lame from birth that we learned about in the first reading. In the Gospel, we see Jesus teaching just after He healed a blind man and afterwards confronted the Pharisees (John 9). The message today alludes to Ezekiel 34, where God condemned the shepherds of Israel, meaning the spiritual leaders (Ezekiel 34:1-10). Ezekiel announced God's strong judgment on the kings, priests, and prophets who ruled before the exile of the Jews to Babylon. God said, "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them" (Ezekiel 34:10). It's not coincidental that Jesus' message came just after He told a group of Pharisees that they were spiritually blind (John 9:41).

This section of Scripture is profound in that throughout the Chapter Jesus uses a metaphor of Himself as the Shepherd and the Door, with us (the children of God) as the sheep. Other characters come into play in the lesson including a hired hand, owner, and wolf. As you read, think about the contemporary application of these characters as Jesus' illustration unfolds. In the world today, who are the hired hands and wolves to whom Jesus was pointing?

Gospel Reading

John 10:11-18 NAS95 11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

It's evident that Jesus' message was pointed squarely at the Pharisees, a group of selfishly motivated "lay ministers" (shepherds) of Israel identified as the wolves and hired hands in this story (v. 12). Clearly, the owner of the sheep is God the Father, and Jesus stated outright that He is the Good Shepherd. He even added extra emphasis by using the Greek term transliterated "ego eimi," translated "I Am" (v. 11), a term which Jesus had repeated multiple times about Himself beginning in John 6:35. This phrase was something that the First Century Jews would have recognized as a strong statement of divinity. In Jesus' earlier use of this phrase in this Gospel He said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), and "I am the light of the world" (John 8:35). In today's reading Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd" (v. 11a). Jesus is our protector, the one who provides us with spiritual sustenance, and protects us from our enemies. He is the Light of truth from God, the Light that leads us to the single door to obtain eternal life, the only way to God.

Jesus went on to explain, with the context of the Pharisees in mind, that the plan of salvation would

be extended to the "other sheep" (v. 16), meaning the Gentiles, and they would join with the flock of the believing Jews. He foreshadowed His death by telling how the shepherd would lay down His life for the combined Jewish and Gentile flock. Finally, Jesus made a very important point that He was not a victim. He said that He was given the power by His Father to lay down His life for His sheep. Nowhere in the Bible is Jesus ever portrayed as a victim. On the night He was betrayed Jesus said, "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). Jesus gave up His life in voluntary submission to the Father. This teaching has important implications for our daily walk as believers. As we contemplate Jesus' voluntary sacrifice for us, would we not want to voluntarily reciprocate and sacrifice our misguided desires for Him? The call of the Gospel is one of invitation, not coercion and manipulation. Jesus' voluntary death on the cross built a bridge of trust to us in our desperate situation. May we cross the bridge of trust and learn to walk with Him on a daily basis.

Finally, Jesus is our protector from the wolves. Though Jesus directed His message to the Pharisees, these ungodly forces are alive and well in the present day. All one has to do is click through the television dial on any given day to find spiritual charlatans peddling their wares all across the airwaves. False spiritual cults and belief systems abound, as do global religious movements that enthrone the false god of the moon and objects in temples. Peter said about the false teachers, "But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed" (2 Peter 2:12). Though we live in a fallen age where spiritual darkness is present across the world, we are called as the ones that God knows by name to continue to plead with the lost and dying generation to repent of their sins and be baptized, trusting only in the Lord Jesus for spiritual life.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. Jesus is referred to as our Good Shepherd and the Guardian of our soul. In what areas are you struggling on your own and need to let Him into your life to shepherd you? How does this guardianship of your soul change how you view life and your decisions?

2. In all three passages, we see a variety of angles to identify the greatness of Jesus:

    He is the Chief Cornerstone of the faith

    He is the One who will appear and make us like Him when He returns for believers

    He is the Good Shepherd

Write out your response to these descriptions of Jesus and what difference this should make in your life. Pray this back to the Lord and ask Him to help you to internalize these realities in your soul.

Readings for the Week

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First Reading ACTS 4:8-12

Second Reading 1 JN 3:1-2

Gospel Reading JN 10:11-18

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