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Study Notes for the Sunday Mass, November 24, 2013



Isaiah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah shortly after the Northern Kingdom (called Israel) was conquered by Assyria in 722 BC. Isaiah brought a dire message to Judah that God was going to use a foreign nation to judge them, like what had just happened to Israel.

He also proclaimed a message of hope and restoration including a promise that a Messiah would come to restore all that would be taken from God's chosen people. He said regarding this future Ruler, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel" (7:14). He continued, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6). Isaiah's Book then moved onto the near term prediction about the coming invasion by Babylon.

Isaiah is one of the most important prophets because of all of the information he provided regarding the coming Messiah. Chapter 53 is one of the books that present day Jews are prohibited from reading. After you read this section, you will understand why because it provides some profound insights into the nature of Jesus.

> 1 *Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. 3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. (Isaiah 53:1-6)*

Jesus, Isaiah said, would be a man of plain appearance (v. 2), a person well acquainted with the trials of life (v. 3). He said that the Messiah would bear the sorrows of the people (v.4) and be "pierced for their transgressions" (v. 5a) and the Lord would cause Him to atone for all of our sin (v. 6c). Later in this same chapter Isaiah gave more intimate details about how Jesus would die. He said, "Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors" (v.12). Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, we can see that Isaiah said that 1. Jesus would be proclaimed "great" on that day (a sign was hung over His head stating that He was the King of the Jews), 2. His possessions would be divided, and 3. He would be killed alongside of others. How remarkable is it that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled to the exact detail, as we will see in the Gospel reading today.

Moving from Isaiah's predication about the events at Calvary let's take a look at what Saint Paul had to say to the Colossians in the second reading today.

> *12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities–all things have been created by Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. Colossians 1:12-20*

Paul provided some deep truths about the nature of our relationship to God as believers in Jesus Christ. These truths are so profound that it's hard to comprehend all that Paul said in this short section. He said that "we have been delivered from the devil's kingdom" (v.13), which is Satan's

empire (Matthew 4:9) into which we became citizens when were born. However, after we were born from above (John 3:3) through faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8-9) God forgave our sins and transferred us into His holy kingdom (Col 1:14). God created everything for His own purposes (v. 16) and He is the Head of the Church, the preeminent One (v.18, also John 3:16 "the only begotten Son"). It was through Jesus' death on the cross as the sin bearer that He made peace with us through His precious blood that was poured out for us (v.20). The peace that Jesus earned for us extends not only to the earth but to the entire universe including heaven (v. 20).

These truths about our new life in Christ are so deep that it reminds me of the words of the Christian hymn "How Great Though Art" of which verse three reads as follows.

> *And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,*
>
> *Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;*
>
> *That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing,*
>
> *He bled and died to take away my sin.*

Jesus bore *our* burdens on the cross. He did it gladly knowing that through His finished work there He would take away our sin and disarm the powers of darkness (Col 2:15). With these truths in mind let us move into the Gospel lesson.

In the Gospel this week in Luke Chapter 23, we jump forward to the Good Doctor's account of the crucifixion of Jesus. This is a sudden turn of events since last week in Chapter 21 Jesus gave a prediction of the destruction of the temple and looked forward to the time of His **second** coming. Read the lesson for today and pay particular attention to the insights that you picked up from Isaiah 53.

> *32 And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. 33 And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. 34 But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. 35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." 36 And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" 38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." 39 And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" 40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" 43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." Luke 23:32-43*

It played out exactly as Isaiah said it would. Jesus had his possessions divided (v.34), was crucified with others (v.32), and proclaimed to be a King (v.38). Yet even at the hour of His death Jesus showed compassion for others. First, Jesus prayed to God the Father to forgive the people that were bringing about his crucifixion. He said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (v.34a).

Second, when one of the criminals on the cross expressed repentance and faith in Him (v.42) Jesus told him, "today you shall be with Me in Paradise." Isn't it amazing that this criminal's simple faith resulted in Jesus' promise of eternal life with Him in heaven in spite of the fact that he wasn't baptized and had never gone to church or synagogue?

What is the relevance and importance of Luke's teaching for us in our lives today? First, we can be reassured that like the repentant thief on the cross since we too have repented of our sin and trusted in Jesus' finished work on the cross that we will be and are saved. Second, we can trust that we won't receive what we deserve for our deeds but will instead receive rich blessings from God purely as a result of His grace and not as a result of anything that we have done to earn it (Ephesians 2:8-9). Since Jesus already entered His Kingdom these blessings will come to us in both the present time and also in the future when we meet Jesus face to face. "And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,

Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in. How great Thou art!"

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. Read and reflect upon Paul's Letter the Colossians, Chapter 1 verses 13-14:

> "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

What are the some practical implications of what these verses mean in your life as a believer in Jesus? Answer this question in light of the following contexts:

– When I am feeling afraid

– When I am feeling that evil people are encompassing me

– When I feel that I need to try harder to be a better person and not miss Mass

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/112413.cfm Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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First Reading 2 Samuel 5:1-3 (plus skipped verses 4-5)

2 Samuel 5:1-5 NASB 1 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. 2 "Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.'" 3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the LORD at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel. 4 David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. 5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.

Second Reading Colossians 1:12-20

Colossians 1:12-20 NASB 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities–all things have been created by Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Gospel Reading Luke 23:35-43 plus skipped verses 32-33

Luke 23:32-43 NASB 32 And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. 33 And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. 34 But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. 35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." 36 And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" 38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." 39 And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" 40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 "And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" 43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

Source(s):

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

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass, November 3, 2013 – 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time



It was a very windy midsummer day in northern Michigan as I raced my windsurf board across the Straits of Mackinaw on my way back from Mackinaw Island, Michigan. Earlier, I sailed between the towers of the mighty Mackinaw Bridge and then returned to the shore of Lake Huron to make a few adjustments on my sail.

Next, I sailed seven miles across the Straits to Mackinaw Island and was on my way back towards the campground where we were staying. At this point the wind began calming and shifting in a direction that was going to make it very difficult to return to the spot from where I had launched. Eventually I made it back to the sandy shore on Lake Huron, but was a few miles down from where I launched. I walked up the hill, borrowed a cell phone from someone, and called my wife to pick me up. I heard a strange silence on the other end and she said, "You're alive!" As it turned out someone had given some bad information to the police who then called the Coast Guard thinking that I had gone down somewhere in the Straits. This led to a series of cascading events including a large manhunt with a helicopter, rescue divers, and local police operating from a command center in a marina in Mackinaw City. Evidently, a fellow camper had been watching me from the shore and at some point, she couldn't locate me. She then proceeded to tell one of the authorities at the campground who then called the police. The police then alerted the Coast Guard and the manhunt was on! The whole affair began by one piece of bad information. [*If you are interested you can read*

the story online here: http://www.cheboygannews.com/article/20130720/NEWS/130719421]

In the same way that a false report led to a series of cascading events that day while I was windsurfing, false information in the church can lead to a plethora of serious effects in the Christian church. This was the case in the second reading today from Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians. This was Paul's second written communication to this group of believers who had believed some false information concerning the timing of and events surrounding the return of the Lord Jesus. The overall purpose of the letter also included the encouragement of the believers in Thessalonica during their ongoing persecution for their faith.

Read the text including verses 3 – 12 which were skipped in the lectionary and are necessary understand the context and the points which Paul were addressing.

> *11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. 12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2:1 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. 5 Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? 6 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. (2 THES 1:11-2: 12 NIV)*

The key verses that revealed the context of Paul's address in this section were chapter 2 verses 1-2. "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come." Evidently, the people had believed a false report from a forged letter reportedly written by Paul that Jesus had already returned. This news was very disturbing to the Thessalonians because they were enduring

persecution for Jesus and if He had already returned then they had possibly been suffering for nothing. Paul had explained in his first letter to them how believers would meet the Lord Jesus upon his return. "According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1Th 4:15-17). The phrase "caught up" in the original language is the word "harpazo" which means to snatch or take away. The same word translated in the Latin is "rapturo." Although the timing of this biblical event is unknown, Paul's teaching provided hope for the Thessalonian believers who were undergoing persecution. Paul was clear that Jesus' return wasn't something that they possibly could have missed since every single believer would be affected.

The Day of the Lord (DOL) is a very significant topic in both the Old and New Testament. The DOL is the time when Jesus will return for His Church and the Father will pour out His wrath on unbelievers. The interpretation of the meaning of DOL depends upon the theological grid from which you view the events of the end times. Most scholars believe that the DOL occurs in the middle of what is called the tribulation period, what the Book of Daniel calls this period the 70'th week. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" (Daniel 9:24). The DOL marks the beginning of the second half of the period known as the Great Tribulation. Joel said about this period, "Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand–a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come" (Joel 2:1-2). He also said that this was a time of redemption, for many people (especially Jews) will come to faith. "And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls" (v.32). Like the "catching up" from 1 Thess 4:17, the DOL wasn't something that the believers wouldn't notice. The purpose of Paul's writing to the church in Thessalonica was to correct this erroneous belief.

Paul continued with a very detailed explanation of the series of events that would lead up to the return of the Lord Jesus to carry away His Church. Paul said that a "man of lawlessness" would be revealed, a future world leader known throughout the Scripture as the "Antichrist." This satanic person would "oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (v.4). The lawlessness of this end time will be held back by the power of God until the time that the man of sin is revealed (vv.7-8). The man of sin will be accompanied by "the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders" (v.9). The people that remain on the earth during this time will "refuse to love the truth and so be saved" (v.10b). This leads to a terrible conclusion. "For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (vv. 11-12). The powerful delusion is partly the counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders brought about through satanic powers that are allowed to rule the earth during this terrible period of time. The satanic

deception of the Antichrist, the person known as the False Prophet, and Satan constitute an unholy trinity that will wage war upon the people left on earth during the end times. To read about these three evil personalities read Revelation Chapters 12 and 13.

After the believers in Thessalonica read Paul's prophecy about what would happen around the time of the Lord's return they would have been comforted to know that they hadn't missed Jesus as they had heard among the rumors that had been circulating. Paul's teaching about the end times helped them to view their suffering in light of the epic battle that would rage in the era when the Lord Jesus really did return. The "battle" though is no battle at all, for "the Lord Jesus will overthrow [him] with the breath of his mouth" (v.8). That shows us the undisputed ruling power of our Lord, which should bring us hope and comfort, just as it did for the Thessalonian Church.

Our take away from this passage is to heed Paul's warning. Don't be deceived – the Day of the Lord is still to come. Therefore, love the truth and let it lead you to safety. Many books have been written on the subject of the end times and we hope that everyone investigates these matters for themselves by carefully reading and studying the Bible. The brief introduction that we gave today perhaps raises more questions than it answered! We will close this brief introduction to *eschatology*, or the study of the things of the end, and move onto the Gospel lesson.

The Gospel lesson for today was from Luke Chapter 19. It is essential to survey the context of the verses we are studying today in order to understand the full context and therefore the meaning of the text. If we back up to Luke 18:18 – 27 we found an occasion where Jesus was confronted by a certain person that was both a ruler and chief tax collector. This ruler asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (v. 18). Jesus explained to him the requirements of the Jewish Law, and then addressed wealth, the particular obstacle to finding God that existed in the ruler's heart. "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (18b). Read the subsequent verses in this section.

> *23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." (Luke 18:23-27).*

Jesus mentioned the impossibly of a camel being able to pass through the eye of a needle. Throughout the ages, a story circulated that goes something like this. Somewhere along the wall in Jerusalem there was a gate called the "eye of the needle" which required a man to dismount his animal in order to pass through at night when all of the other gates were closed. As the saying goes, the existence of this certain gate meant that when Jesus spoke of a camel going through the eye of a needle he was referring to this particular feature in Jerusalem. The legend went on to say that in this Gospel story Jesus wasn't actually saying that it was impossible for a rich man to enter heaven because he was referring to this certain pint-sized entrance along the wall of Jerusalem. What he meant was that for a man to be saved he would have to prostrate himself before God and crawl on

his knees in the same way that he could fit through the tiny gate. God does require a humble and prostrate heart in order to come to faith and to a certain extent, this legend is helpful if interpreted that way. Many people have researched this matter and have found that no such gate has ever existed in Jerusalem. Jesus gave an even better explanation of the whole matter in the text itself. Jesus knew that this young man was relying heavily upon his wealth and that it would be very difficult for him to lay it down in order to rely only upon Jesus for salvation. Jesus clarified that it wasn't impossible for rich people to be saved, but this could only happen through the power of God.

With this context in mind, let's move onto the Gospel lesson in Luke Chapter 19 in which Jesus encounters an unusual rich man that *does* receive salvation through the power of God. He didn't even have to locate the fictitious "eye of the needle" in Jerusalem!

> *1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" 8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Luke 19:1-10*

Zacchaeus' statement about giving away his wealth and repaying those he had cheated provided a glimpse into the true condition of his repentant heart. Jesus, who through the power of the Holy Spirit was able to read people's minds, understood that Zacchaeus truly did turn from pursuing wealth as his god rely upon God for his salvation. With the exhibition of his faith, Zacchaeus revealed that he was saved through belief in God. Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house" (v.9b). Once again, we saw that Jesus chose someone to pursue whom everyone in the community knew was a lost sinner, to "save what was lost" (v.10b). As we have pointed out in last week's study notes, good works and intentions do not make us a Christian, they merely reveal the condition of our heart. In this case, Zacchaeus' good works indicated that his heart had truly been changed by God's power.

What does it take for a person with power, privileges and wealth to become a Christian? The story about the Philippian jailor in the Book of Acts helps to shed light on what it takes for a person of authority like Zacchaeus in Luke's Gospel to be saved. In this particular story, the gates of the prison flew open after an earthquake, and the jailor feared for his life because he was responsible for the security of the men inside. If one person escaped, it might mean the death penalty for him. After the jailor awoke from the earthquake, he was sure that the prisoners were gone. Instead, he found Paul and Silas inside. "He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be

saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved– you and your household'" (Acts 16:30-31). Rich people and people in positions of authority such as this jailor can have a very difficult time coming to faith in Jesus Christ. However, through the power of God even the hardest hearts can be broken. The conclusion of the story is as follows. "Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God— he and his whole family" (Acts 16:32,34 emphasis added). The Philippian jailor was saved in the same way as Zacchaeus, through faith in Jesus Christ by the hearing of the Word of God.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. Paul told the Thessalonians not to be deceived but instead to love the truth that will save them. Read the following list of false beliefs. With which of these false beliefs can you identify? Pick one and then study the corresponding verses such that you understand the corresponding truth.

A. False Belief: All religions lead to God. Anyone that acts according to their conscience, even if they don't trust in Jesus, will go to heaven.

> *John 3:16-21 NIV 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."*

> *Acts 4:8-12 NIV 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

> *John 14:6 NIV 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

> *Matthew 13:40-43 NIV 40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

> *Mt 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*

B. False Belief: God doesn't provide salvation to people who "just" repent and believe, salvation can only come through the authority of the Church.

> *Luke 23:32-43 NIV 32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals– one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." 36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37 and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." 38 There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*

C. False Belief: I'm basically a good person. If I go to church every Sunday and Holy Day as well as adhere to most of the teachings of the Church, I will go to heaven.

> *Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

> *Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

> *1Corinthians 6:9-11 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do*

> *not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

> *John 14:6 NIV 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

> *Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

> *John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

2. Now that you see these false beliefs contradict the truth, meditate on the following scripture. Then, take some time to talk to God, confess any false beliefs that you may hold, and ask God the Father to help you love the truth.

> *Romans 10:9-13 NIV 9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile– the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

For Further Study

Sam was a devout Jew who was a gifted piano performer. He was very religious on the outside, however on the inside, his heart was bent on sin and he knew something was terribly wrong. Listen to Sam's compelling story (25 minutes, Words to Live By radio program):

http://words.net/2013/10/25/no-man-in-human-history-ever-said-words-like-that-sams-story/

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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/110313.cfm Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading

WIS 11:22-12:2

Before the LORD the whole universe is as a grain from a balance or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth. But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook people's sins that they may repent. For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned. And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you? But you spare all things, because they are yours, O LORD and lover of souls, for your imperishable spirit is in all things! Therefore you rebuke offenders little by little, warn them and remind them of the sins they are committing, that they may abandon their wickedness and believe in you, O LORD!

Second Reading

2 THES 1:11-2:2 (Plus skipped verses 3-12)

11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. 12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.

Skipped verses:

3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. 5 Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? 6 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Gospel Reading

Luke 19:1-10

1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief
tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because
of the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.
5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must
stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and
began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" 8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord,
"Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of
anything, I will pay back four times the amount." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house,
because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Source(s):

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

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