Study Notes for the Sunday Mass

Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. Find us on the web at: http://www.christiansforchrist.org

We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Roman Catholic 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

Welcome back to the Sunday Mass Study Notes for **6-19-2016**. One of the main take away points from this week's readings is the role of Jesus as Messiah Who saves peoples from their sins. This is in contrast to the teachers of that age who taught that salvation came through obedience of the works of the Jewish Law. We will also discuss how taking your cross is an invitation to freedom and not a burden.

Read Online:http://www.christiansforchrist.org/articles/weekly-study-notes-for-the-sunday-mass/06-19-2016

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from the Prophet Zechariah. Zechariah, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, was a priest. He wrote to the exiles in Babylon to comfort them by giving them God's Word that He would fulfil all of the promises He made to His covenant people the Jews.

First Reading:

Note: The reading omitted 12 and 13 which are include below.

> *Zechariah 12:10 - 13:1 NAS95 10 "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. 11 In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves; 13 the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves; 14 all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves. 1 In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity."*

Today's reading looks far forward to a future day in which God will awaken a remnant of the Jews who return to Him in faith. Saint Paul records this clearly in Romans 11 where he explains how God allowed the hardening of the Jews so that the Gentiles could find salvation. "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Romans 11:25). Once the very last Gentile that God has ordained has come to faith in Jesus the next chapter in God's master plan will begin, which is the awakening of the Jewish remnant alive at that time. "And so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB" (Romans 11:26).

In this passage, Zechariah is describing events related to the Day of the Lord, also known as Jesus' second coming. In the affairs at the end of time, Zechariah states that God will pour out the Spirit of grace and of supplication on the Jewish people. What does this mean? God's grace means that the Jewish people are given favor that they did not earn and that they do not deserve. A Spirit of supplication means that people will be given a burden to ask for things in prayer that are on God's heart, and He will answer their cries. Zechariah also describes great mourning as they look on the One that

they have pierced. The mourning is likened to Hadadrimmon, where Josiah was slain by the Egyptians. The immense sorrow that was felt throughout all of Israel was a focal point in Jewish history because Josiah was one of the very few godly kings and did much to point Judah back to their covenant relationship with God. Therefore, when Zechariah says that their mourning over the killing of the Messiah will be like this great tragedy, he is clarifying that the Jews will understand and regret their role in crucifying Jesus in his first coming. This grieving will culminate in personal awareness of sin and impurity, so that God's people will see sin the same way He sees it.

Grieving over sin is an important part of growing to be like Christ. As a Christian, we are instructed by this passage to also be aware of the effects of sin in our own lives. Just as the Jews will be shocked and grieved over their blindness, we can ask God to shine His light into our lives and give us spiritual sight. This spiritual sight may cause grief as we start to see things from God's perspective, but it will ultimately cause cleansing and healing in our relationship with Him and bring wisdom for daily living.

Introduction to the Second Reading:
Paul explains in the second reading, that those who believe in Jesus are the offspring of Abraham and, therefore, heir to the promise given to him in Genesis. The line of thought before the reading delineates that the promise of God was made before the giving of the Mosaic law, and is predicated on faith not works, ethnicity, social standing, gender, etc. This section is a culmination of Paul's main point in the entire book of Galatians, where he explains that justification is by faith, not by works.

Second Reading:

> *Galatians 3:26-29 NAS95 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.*

This passage sums up an important message that the believers in Galatia were struggling to understand. While they had received Christ into their lives by faith, there were some who were convincing them that they still needed to follow the Mosaic law. Paul definitively defends the truth that salvation comes by faith, not by works. He describes the law as a guardian or schoolmaster that was in place to point people to recognize their need for a Savior. So now the question is not "Are you Jewish?" meaning, "are you a son of Abraham?"; but rather, the question is "Are you in Christ?" No matter our national origin, socio-economic status, or gender, we can all be sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. The implication, then, is that we are all on the same team, working together to reflect the reality of Christ's life in our lives. We are heirs to God's promise to Abraham by virtue of being born again in Christ Jesus (John 3:3). Part of what it means to grow in Christ is to grow in our understanding of all the rights and privileges of being a son or daughter of God.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:
The context of the Gospel reading from Luke is just after his recording of the miracle of the feeding for the five thousand (Luke 9:10-17). The parallel Gospel accounts reveal that after this great miracle, Jesus retreated in the same boat that they had taken to the "desolate place" from the village of Bethsaida (Mark 6:30, 32, 45). The Gospel writers Matthew, Mark and John record an important event that occurred during the water journey. After Jesus had dismissed the crowds, He directed the disciples to

take the boat to the other side of the lake, back to Bethsaida while He went up on the mountain to pray (Matthew 14:22). As the disciples attempted to work their way upwind (Matthew 14:24), they saw Jesus walking on the water (v. 25). At this point Peter joined Jesus walking on the sea, at least for a time until Jesus rescued him and helped him back into the boat (v. 29). Next the group went "up on the mountain to pray" (Mark 6:46) after passing by the "region of Magadan" (Matthew 15:39) where Jesus got into a heated discussion with the Pharisees who came to test Him (Matthew 16:1012). It is after this whirlwind of events that we pick up with today's reading.

Gospel Reading:

> *Luke 9:18-24 NAS95 18 And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" 19 They answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." 20 And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." 21 But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, 22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day." 23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. 24 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."*

Jesus' inquiry of the disciples: "Who do the people say that I am" (v. 18) evidently took place in Caesarea Philippi as we see in Matthew 16:13 and Mark 8:27. It is interesting that Jesus chose this mysterious place because it was a location that was used for pagan worship. Jesus sought refuge in this unique place away from the crowds ("alone," v. 18) to seek fellowship in prayer with His heavenly Father, which was His practice. The disciples had just experienced the miracles of the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus' walking on the water. However, we know from the parallel account they continually failed to understand (Matthew 16:9). Therefore, Jesus inquired of them regarding His true identity (v. 18). The disciples said that the people saw Jesus as another John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the Old Testament prophets that rose from the dead (v. 19). Peter, being inspired by God Himself, declared Jesus to be the Messiah (another word for Christ), which means the anointed one of God who would come to save His people (Matthew 16:17).

Why would Jesus not want his disciples to share this with others? Was Jesus trying to hide His identity or obscure His mission in the world? No. We understand this warning in light of the misconceptions that the Jews had for the Messiah. Instead of a civil king that would vanquish the Roman rule, Jesus was a spiritual king seeking to vanquish the enemy of our souls, one heart at a time. He predicted how he would do this, which required his suffering, rejection by the Jewish leaders, crucifixion and resurrection. The call to discipleship to this type of king would require a level of commitment that some would have trouble accepting. Jesus shared an important value of life in His kingdom. Instead of being ruled by self and sin, Jesus saves us to bring us freedom to follow a new way of life that is ruled by His value system. In denying self, we are not building up a treasury of merit; instead, we are being freed up for the abundant life that Jesus came to bring us (John 10:10). In looking at it another way, God does us a favor by freeing us from the oppressive nature of self so that we can live the life He has designed for us to live in Christ. We lose what we thought was our life, but gain what God defines as true life. This requires great faith. No wonder those who give their life over to Christ and walk by faith are called the children of Abraham.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. Just as the Jewish people in Jesus' day had misunderstandings about what they needed to be saved from, what are some misunderstandings that present day people think they need to be saved from? Which misguided notions of Jesus' Messiahship resonate most deeply with you? How does your growing knowledge of the Word of God and relationship with the true Messiah help you to counteract these misguided notions?

2. How does understanding that denying myself and carrying my cross is not about working or merit, but about freedom? How does Jesus' promise to bring abundant life factor into your view of denying the false notions of what this life is about and give you encouragement to take up your cross in a way that brings life that is truly life?

3. When you consider the unity of the family of God through faith in Christ explained in the Galatians' reading, what ways can you contribute to the value that people have for one another and, especially for those who are different than they are.

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/061916.cfm
Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Lectionary: 90

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/
Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Keywords:

freedom in Christ, Messiah, salvation by faith, carry your cross, children of Abraham, mourning