

8/2/10

Lord, teach me your statutes. [Jer 28:1-17](#) [Ps 119:29, 43, 79, 80, 95, 102](#) [Mt 14:13-21](#)

Isn't it interesting that we have just been presented with the story of how Jesus was treated in His "native place". The old saying "familiarity breeds contempt" comes to mind. Note that Matthew says "he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith." (Mt 13:58) This translation doesn't say that He could not, just that He did not. In today's gospel we are presented with Jesus' reaction to the loss of someone very familiar to Him. A person, John, who recognized Him, and confirmed His own understanding of Himself, even though he was a very close relative. Jesus' reaction is very human. The kind of thing anyone who grieves will understand. Yet, even in the light of the lack of faith of His closest followers Jesus works one of His mightiest deeds. The first reading cautions those who would speak in the name of God. Thankfully, very few of us have this burden today. He is so very close and personal and available to all. When He speaks we need to listen directly to Him, even though we already know what He will say. His word is always telling us how to serve Him by loving others. He is always calling on us to distribute the daily bread, and if we are gathering fragments, it is only so that they too can be distributed.

8/3/10

The Lord will build up Zion again, and appear in all his glory. [Jer 30:1-2, 12-15, 18-22](#) [Ps 102:16-18, 19-21, 29 and 22-23](#) [Mt 14:22-36](#) or [Mt 15:1-2, 10-14](#)

Sometimes I am confused by the way the "selector" assembled the readings. In my opinion, today would be a good day to go back to the source and read the full passages. The prophecy of Jeremiah makes much more sense to me when you know from the very beginning that God is promising restoration to His people, although they still must endure the consequences and punishment for their unfaithfulness. It is especially clarified for me in the passage in verses 3-11. It is, to me, a clear prophecy of the coming of Jesus. In other words, we will be delivered, and it will be through the punishment Jesus accepts and suffers. We also have two gospels with a chunk left out, Mt 15:4-9. In those few verses is the clear admonition to those who "honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;" Still through it all, Peter sinking in the waves, thousands being healed, blind leading the blind, the message is clear. Follow Jesus only. Talk to Him; listen to Him, as they said to Him "Truly, you are the Son of God."

8/5/10

Create a clean heart in me, O God. [Jer 31:31-34](#) [Ps. 51:12-13, 14-15, 18-19](#) [Mt 16:13-23](#)

We live in a wonderful era of our relationship with God. We need no teachers. We are living in the New Covenant and are the very Body of Christ. We have the very keys to the Kingdom, all we need do is keep the doors unlocked. It is very sad that so often in our humanity we lock them up for ourselves or for those who think like we do, or agree with us.

The really sad thing is that whenever we do this we are locking them not against others but against ourselves. I say "Open the doors!". "Open the gates!" "You can not lock God in, all you are doing is locking yourself and the others out!" The rock of our salvation is not Peter, but Jesus. Knowing that Jesus is all is a gift. It is the foundation for everything else. We need no teachers because it is written plainly in our hearts. All we need do is share it and enjoy it and He will use our generosity and joy to draw others, one by one, into that same community of joy.

8/7/10

You forsake not those who seek you, O Lord. [Hb 1:12-2:4](#) [Ps 9:8-9, 10-11, 12-13](#) [Mt 17:14-20](#)

One of the great gulfs in agreement that keeps the Christian Church broken, shattered into pieces, is this idea of FAITH. Perhaps part of the problem is the ambiguity of English words. It depends entirely on the meaning of you. Is you personal or corporate. Jesus admonition is so often conveyed to us as being personal. Just like that "little ole ant" I can't because my faith is just plain too weak. Perhaps Jesus is saying "Our Father can't because the faith of the Church is so weak". It makes all the difference in the world. It is that constant call I hear from him to Community, His Community. If I am correct, what He desires will never come about by a bunch of folks, though they be billions in number, clinching their fists, puffing their cheeks and squinting their eyes while they strain to believe. It will most definitely come, like melting shattered ice drains into pools of refreshing water, only when our hearts are warmed with love for one another. As His love, alive in His children, draws us together in Him, real faith grows by leaps and bounds and He, not us, can move whole ranges of mountains.

8/9/10

Heaven and earth are filled with your glory. [Ez 1:2-5, 24-28c](#) [Ps 148:1-2, 11-12, 13, 14](#) [Mt 17:22-27](#)

Have you ever come upon the scene of a terrible tragedy? Some might rush to render aid, Some turn away in revulsion and horror, some may be simply paralyzed with shock. In the gospel today Jesus predicts His death and resurrection, and His disciples are overwhelmed with grief!!! Why? It is normal to yield to the natural feelings of revulsion and horror we experience in the face of a violent death. It is natural for us to lack the faith to rest confident of the resurrection. In a sense this reality is the great metaphor for all acts of faith. Can we rejoice in the face of the dying we encounter in so very many ways every day of our lives? Yes, but only to the extent of our faith in the ultimate resurrection. Remember that the kings of the earth have a claim on us that is far beyond our ability to pay. Death is our ultimate tribute. It is the tax burden we must certainly render. Our only hope rests in the one who has supplied the coin for His own and ours too.

8/10/10 St Lawrence Day

Blessed the man who is gracious and lends to those in need. [2 Cor 9:6-10](#) [Ps 112:1-2, 5-6, 7-8, 9](#) [Jn 12:24-26](#)

What a wonderful day for folks like me. The feast of the patron saint of comedians and cooks. All I ever want to do is bring a little joy into peoples lives, something cooks and comedians are famous for! I guess I am just a glutton for simplicity, so I suggest to you: Would you reap an abundant harvest? Then sow joy lavishly!

PS: "I'm done on this side. Turn me over and take a bite."

8/11/10

The glory of the Lord is higher than the skies. [Ez 9:1-7; 10:18-22](#) [Ps 113:1-2, 3-4, 5-6](#) [Mt 18:15-20](#)

Again there is a large gap in the first reading for today. When you get a chance, take a look at the whole thing. Ezekiel's vision has engendered countless words of speculation. Some even holding that he saw a UFO. To "Zeke"; however, there was no question about the identity. He saw the Glory of the Lord. The

letter Thau, ☉PRIVATE "TYPE=PICT;ALT=T" . , stands last in the listing of the Hebrew letters. It is sometimes translated here as "X". Though I find it hard to see, many describe it as the "form of a cross" and some in the early Church saw it and this passage as the sign that we are saved by the cross of Jesus. I have read that St Francis, for this reason, chose the Thau as a symbol for his order. Thau is said to represent infinity, though the numerologists value it at 400. In some sections it is seen to represent the very center of everything. In this sense it is the point where all things intersect, where everything meets and comes together. In the end this morning I am brought to the simple truth of the gospel, community. I have been around a few years and have seen community grow, and seen it fall apart. In every case of dissolution un-dealt-with or improperly-dealt-with sin is right there at the core. On the other hand I have seen many times over how dealing properly, as Jesus tells us, with the real or perceived sins of one another will bring community. In the end that oft quoted verse is so very true: "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." When He is in our midst how can we fail to deal with the sins we commit against each other. He is the center of everything and is always drawing everything together.

8/12/10

Do not forget the works of the Lord! [Ez 12:1-12](#) [Ps 78:56-57, 58-59, 61-62](#) [Mt 18:21-19:1](#)

To me the first reading is so clearly a message to the Christian of today. For one thing, people will not listen to anything you say, and probably won't see anything that you do, but at least there is a chance! The Parable in today's gospel is very clear. I am very well aware that it is completely impossible to repay my huge debt to the Master. Just think about it. He is and has everything, what in the world, or the entire universe can I offer to Him. On the other hand, Joe Blow next door is in exactly the same sorry shape I am. I can give Him a little love and forgiveness, while I beg the same from him. Personally I think this is the very heart and core of Jesus' message. Serving God to payback your debt to Him is absolutely stupid, but if you get real and kill yourself trying to payback all you owe your brothers and

do your best to forgive every debt they owe you. Well, you certainly will not be able to do it on your own. He will have to help you. That is really all He wants. His grace is a curious fluid. It meanders through a very complicated set of streams. But in the end it is always there where it is needed and wanted.

8/14/10

Create a clean heart in me, O God. [Ez 18:1-10, 13b, 30-32](#) [Ps. 51:12-13, 14-15, 18-19](#) [Mt 19:13-15](#)

Humility is the attitude that shows we recognize who we are, children of our Father. We cannot really come to Him any other way. When we turn away from evil, when we do the right thing, that is when we are living humility. It is not in burying our gifts that we live humbly. It is recognizing the insignificance of our power and ability compared to Him without failing to see how very important it is for those He wishes to love and serve through us.

8/16/10

It is I who deal death and give life. [Ez 28:1-10](#) [Deuteronomy 32:26-27ab, 27cd-28, 30, 35cd-36ab](#) [Mt 19:23-30](#)

Eternal life is a strange concept. Stop and think a minute. How would your life change today if you knew there would be no tomorrow? Isn't so very much of our conscious life lived for tomorrow, or at least the next hour. How would you react if you were summoned to court today? Wouldn't you say "Give me a little time." Or what if your mortgage or car loan were demanded in full? And what need of riches if there is no time to spend them, or use them to impress others? Life in the Spirit is birth into eternal life. It is like birth in very slow motion. It is slow motion because it is the experience of time winding down to an end, coming to a stop, and the end, the stopping point is Eternal Life.

8/17/10

It is I who deal death and give life. [Ez 28:1-10](#) [Deuteronomy 32:26-27ab, 27cd-28, 30, 35cd-36ab](#) [Mt 19:23-30](#)

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8/18/10

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. [Ez 34:1-11](#) [Ps. 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6](#) [Mt 20:1-16](#)

Life in the Spirit demands vigilance in keeping watch over our priorities. Those of us who have been called to the ministry of shepherd (and in my book there are very few who have not been) must simply realize that Jesus is the shepherd. Our job is simply to help them see Him and follow Him. There is no place for us to poke them with sticks, pull on their ears, let alone shout and scream at them. Unless of course we do not believe that He is real and present to us all. In the end it is faith, the faith that allows one to overcome our petty jealousy over all these latecomers in the vineyard.

8/19/10

I will pour clean water on you and wash away all your sins. [Ez 36:23-28](#) [Ps. 51:12-13, 14-15, 18-19](#) [Mt 22:1-14](#)

The readings today are so powerful and so baptismal. My baptism defines me. It is my assent to His grace that has ushered me into this wonderful banquet that is life in the Spirit of God. I am often chastized for not wearing the proper attire, but it does not bother me in the least so long as the clothing of my Baptism is visible to all. I hope and pray that it is, for if so, I am well dressed indeed.

8/24/10

Your friends make known, O Lord, the glorious splendor of your Kingdom. [Rv 21:9b-14](#) [Ps. 145:10-11, 12-13, 17-18](#) [Jn 1:45-51](#)

Friends, He is everywhere. There is no where that He is not. Is this possible? Are there not many places where I cannot see Him? Perhaps that is where my faith is a little too weak. Are there not places and things that lead me away from Him? Perhaps That is because I am lacking in the spirit of Charity at those times and in those places. I am so little, so very weak, and I thank God so much for my littleness and my weakness. I pray constantly for Him to bless me with more weakness and with the grace of diminishing. He is ever the same and unchanging love. As I diminish, His presence, like the waters of a flood, fills all the voids. Then where I am, He is. What is left of me is transformed slowly but surely, and so many others begin to see Him there too. If this is so, Is it not my constant goal to be Him, His very presence so that every second of every day wherever I am others can not fail to know that He is.

8/25/10

Blessed are those who fear the Lord. [2 Thes 3:6-10, 16-18](#) [Ps. 128:1-2, 4-5](#) [Mt 23:27-32](#)

Knowing what to do is important. Knowing what not to do is more important. This is true because I am so self-centered. God knows this about me. Have you noticed that the Ten Commandments are mostly negative? The only positive ones, three and four, even get turned around for my benefit. Love mom and dad so I'll get a long life. Honor the Sabbath so I get a day of rest and a chance to dress up real pretty! God knows it is impossible for us to "do the right thing" so His great servants have at least mandated "do not do" the really bad ones. Do you ever stop to realize that Jesus said the opposite? His commands (I say it is really one command) is love God and love your neighbor

AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF! Or (second lesson) LOVE AS I HAVE LOVED YOU. This is the secret of life in the Spirit. It is not working miracles (God does it despite your selfishness) It is not saying many "prayers" (Jesus didn't say "Pray this prayer"; He said "Pray like this". It is not being a good little girl or boy (That is simply impossible for anyone). The secret that Jesus reveals is that GOD, MY FATHER, IS PASSIONATLY IN LOVE WITH ME!

OK, it's like this. Remember when you were in high school? A very long time ago! Guys what would you do if someone passed you a note that said "Julie, the head cheerleader, has a crush on you!""? Or gals, what if the note said, "Sammy, the valedictorian captain of the football team, has a crush on you!""? I think it would change you at least a little. I think you might do at least some little things to "check it out" and see if it is true. So the bottom line is this. Loving yourself is a very good thing. Selfishness is a terribly bad thing. Why? How can this be? Because it is GOD who loves me and wants to "fill me up" with Himself. I am not full yet. Loving me is loving that part of me He has filled. It is loving Him in me. Selfishness is me loving that part of me that He has not yet filled. In doing so I make that part my God and make it impossible for Him to fill up that part of me. Life in the Spirit is death, the slow dying of that selfish man or woman as I embrace my lover, my true life and self, Jesus. Fiat.

8/26/10

I will praise your name for ever, Lord. [1 Cor 1:1-9](#) [Ps. 145:2-3, 4-5, 6-7](#) [Mt 24:42-51](#)

How very easy it is to lord it over others. After all are they not all so dense, or so lazy, or so mis-informed. They don't come to church like they should. They don't take care of their kids like they should. They are simply just so very bad! Wake up, knucklehead! Your Lord is here. What do you think He will say to you when you turn around and notice that He has been looking over your shoulder all this time!

8/27/10

The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. [1 Cor 1:17-25](#) [Ps. 33:1-2, 4-5, 10-11](#) [Mt 25:1-13](#)

Personally I am amazed at the implications of the Gospel today. Can you imagine a place where you get ten young ladies together and five of them are wise! I have heard that wisdom comes with age, but I expect that if I got a hundred old people together I would be lucky to find one wise one in the collection (present company included for sure!). If I have learned anything about myself in these sixty very odd years, it is that I am so very un-wise. I have even gained the appellation of "Stupid" many times in many settings. I wish I could just get through one day, or one hour, or...without doing something exceedingly dumb! So what can I do? It might not be the smartest thing, but all I know to do is to keep seeking

wisdom through the oil of human kindness. It is a job I am astonishingly ill suited for. One thing I have been learning is that the more I forget my self and think of the others the wiser I become. At least things make more sense to me. It also helps to pay close attention to my wife and the many other lesser authority figures in my life.

8/28/10

Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own. [1 Cor 1:26-31](#) [Ps. 33:12-13, 18-19, 20-21](#) [Mt 25:14-30](#)

It is so very easy to trivialize and miss the point of Jesus' stories. There is such great depth to them. They are profound. So very often I hear well meaning people discuss this story without a clue to what Jesus was talking about. Most realize that it is not money, though I have heard it rolled out to support tithing or "sacrificial" giving. Most stop with it is all the great talents and abilities that God, in His great wisdom, has seen fit to bless this world with by creating me. So I must run out and produce lots of good things for when He comes back to check up on me. Both these fall so very short of the mark. They are like an archer who aims at the target and shoots himself in the back!

In the story the good servant produces for his master double the same thing he was given. He did not take the gift and "produce" something else with it. He used it, he put it to work, he let it double itself. The wicked servant was chided for burying the gift in the ground. He could have at least had the sense to give it to someone else so he could return at least a small part of what it made to the master. In this story the talent does not stand for money. It does not stand for all the marvelous abilities that exist in my personality. In this story the talents represent the grace of God. It is very pure and simple. The grace of God, you may call it His Love, or Faith, or Hope, is the free gift of the Spirit of God Himself. So how do you wisely "invest" this precious gift? Give it away!!! Do you not understand? If you have this gift you know beyond any doubt that its supply is boundless. Every dollop you give away is replaced by a flood more of it. Be like a waterglass under a flowing faucet. You stay filled as the contents flow on to where He needs them. Do not think that when He calls for an accounting you can hand Him an extra sack full. Simply be ready to point to many who have received His precious gifts through you.

8/30/10

Lord, I love your commands. [1 Cor 2:1-5](#) [Ps. 119:97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102](#) [Lk 4:16-30](#)

Amazement is the only certain "reality check" for life in the Spirit. If you think you have it all figured out, i you a sure what to do in every situation, if you are not regularly astonished at the revelation of His love and grace, something is wrong. In such a case it is not Him you are following. His way is always filled with miracles and wonders beyond imagination. His power and His attention to detail is simply awesome and astounding. As His love unfolds in your life you are always running to catch up, and never, ever making it. His love and your joy, like the universe He is creating, is eternaly expanding.

8/31/10

The Lord is just in all his ways. [1 Cor 2:10b-16](#) [Ps. 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13ab, 13cd-14](#) [Lk 4:31-37](#)

Where God is, evil can not be...at least not for long. Darkness is gone when there is light. Death is not where there is life. In today's gospel there was a man in the synagogue with an "unclean" demon. Notice that Jesus didn't clean him up. He threw out the demon altogether. Sometimes we spend a lot of trouble trying to clean up our demons instead of just letting Jesus throw them out. My daddy often advised me that I would be better off if I used my head for something other than a hat-rack. Remember, we have the mind of Christ. Use it.