

## THESE ARE THE READINGS FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### GOD'S WORD FOR THIS WEEK

#### THE CHRISTIAN LOVES GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS

The Christian loves God above all things. The Church prays for the love of God that we might always love him above all things. The lessons warn of the earthly ramifications of such love, but also point to the promised heavenly rewards.

#### TRADITIONAL FIRST LESSON – JEREMIAH 28:5-9

**28**<sup>5</sup> Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah before the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD. <sup>6</sup> He said, "Amen! May the LORD do so! May the LORD fulfill the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the LORD's house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon. <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: <sup>8</sup> From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. <sup>9</sup> But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true."

#### **Q 1) What was Jeremiah predicting about the city of Jerusalem?**

Jeremiah had long predicted that the city of Jerusalem would face war, disaster, and plague because of their rebellion against the Lord. He said that there would be crosses to bear for God's people.

#### **Q 2) What did the prophet Hananiah predict about the same city?**

Hananiah was predicting, contrary to the prophets of the Lord, that Jerusalem would soon enjoy times of peace and prosperity. His message, of course, was popular among the people of Jerusalem.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON – EXODUS 32:15-29

**32**<sup>15</sup> Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. <sup>16</sup> The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. <sup>17</sup> When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp." <sup>18</sup> Moses replied: "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear." <sup>19</sup> When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. <sup>20</sup> And he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it. <sup>21</sup> He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?" <sup>22</sup> "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. <sup>23</sup> They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' <sup>24</sup> So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" <sup>25</sup> Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. <sup>26</sup> So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him. <sup>27</sup> Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.'" <sup>28</sup> The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. <sup>29</sup> Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the LORD today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."

Aaron had seen God standing on the sapphire pavement. The seventy elders had partaken of a divine banquet on the mountain ([Exodus 24](#)). And only forty days later, they lost it all. Unwilling to face conflict for God, they gave in to the people who wanted to love pleasure, flesh, and idols rather than the God who brought them up out of Egypt. Aaron's feeble excuses remind us of our own shallow rationalizations for failing to love God above all things. The Levites, however, rallied to Moses' call and showed that they loved the Lord even more than they loved their brothers. Total commitment to God did not bring peace, but a sword. Yet their devotion was rewarded by God who gave them the high privilege of being his special servants.

#### TRADITIONAL SECOND LESSON – ROMANS 6:1B-11

**6** ...Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup> Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,<sup>[a]</sup> that we should no longer be slaves to in— <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

#### **Q 1) How does St. Paul say we should regard our baptism?**

Paul says that we should understand our baptism as being buried with Christ. Our sinful flesh has been crucified with him.

#### **Q 2) Since baptism means the death of our sinful flesh in this world, what can we expect from our lives in this world?**

There will be many painful experiences as we continue to battle our sinful flesh and daily crucify it with a life of repentance.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON – 1 JOHN 2:15-17

**2**<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father<sup>[a]</sup> is not in them. <sup>16</sup> For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

#### **Q 1) Do not love the world or anything in the world. How easy that is to say; how difficult to do!**

The apostle John repeats Christ's call for total commitment. Love for the world and love of the Father are mutually exclusive. Loving God above all things means recognizing that our cravings, our lust, and our pride come from this world which will not last. So why do we put our love in things that are so transitory? Empires fall, desire wanes, relationships fail, accomplishments crumble. God calls the Christian to love him above all these things and receive a life that will last forever.

#### GOSPEL – MATTHEW 10:34-42

**10**<sup>34</sup> "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—<sup>36</sup> a man's enemies will be the members of his own household." <sup>37</sup> "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup> Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. <sup>40</sup> "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup> Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. <sup>42</sup> And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

#### **Q 1) What does Jesus mean: he came to bring a sword?**

Jesus wants us to realize that he is a divisive figure. People argue about who Jesus is and what he came to do. While many people in this world suggest that there is more than one way to God, Jesus is unequivocal: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me" ([John 14:6](#)). As a result, one can either be for Jesus or against him. There is no middle ground.

#### **Q 2) Why does Jesus speak such thorny words in these verses?**

He wants us to realize the cost of discipleship and to make an informed decision before we become one of his disciples. The life of discipleship is not an easy one. There are crosses to bear.

#### PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

##### **Pentecost Week 6**

O God, You have prepared joys beyond understanding for those who love You. Pour into our hearts such love for You that, loving You above all things, we may obtain Your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

(All Scripture Readings are from NIV 2011)