

Lessons for The Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

October 22, 2023

Psalm 96:1–9 (10–13) ~ *The psalmist calls all nations to praise God who rules over the whole earth.*

Isaiah 45:1–7 ~ *God commissioned Cyrus to subdue nations and carry out His will.*

1 Thessalonians 1:1–10 ~ *God chose the Thessalonians to receive the Gospel and model Christian faith.*

Matthew 22:15–22 ~ *Jesus taught even Caesar's taxes should be used in service to God by His people.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Citizens of God's Kingdom in the Cities of the World

Through Isaiah, God promised to give wealth and power to the Persian king, Cyrus, so that he would know the Lord, the God of Israel, is the only God. St. Paul reminded the Thessalonian believers that they had been chosen by God, for their lives were motivated by their faith, love, and hope in Jesus Christ. In the Gospel lesson for the day, some Pharisees intended to trap Jesus between the law of Rome and the loyalty of the people by making him decide for or against Caesar's tax. Jesus made them show the people that even Pharisees carried an image of Caesar around with them! Because we were made in God's image, we belong to the Lord.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord, everything I have is yours. Help me use it to spread your kingdom and proclaim your glory and to promote the welfare of my neighbors. Amen.

PRAYER FOR MISSIONS: Almighty Lord, You form the light and create darkness; You bring prosperity and create disaster; apart from You there is no God. Help us see that because we belong to You our work is produced by faith and our labor prompted by love, so that all people everywhere may know Your salvation; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: God has commissioned Christians to use the riches of this world to share the riches of the world to come.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, bless these gifts from willing hands
 To bring good news to many lands.
 Give messengers to spread your grace
 To hardened souls in every place. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: Like the Pharisees, we find it all too convenient to adopt the idolatries of this world when it suits our purposes; even so, Jesus reminds us that God created humanity to be his own, made in His image. In Christ, God has restored us to Himself, so that we are to dedicate our lives to Him. Would that we could as readily adapt the conveniences of this world to the urgent task of extending the kingdom of God's grace!

Questions to Consider: Ways to Work Remotely (*Working in this World for the Kingdom of God*)

- How can Cyrus be the Lord's anointed (*Hebrew: messiah*)?
- What are the responsibilities of those who have been chosen by God?
- Describe a hypocrisy in your life between what you believe and how you use material goods.
- In spite of our failed responsibilities and glaring hypocrisies, how has God put his imprint on us?

Bonus on next page: Faith Tracks 1

FAITH TRACKS - 1

*For Marcia, on her new venture
with Christus Spohn*

Somewhere beyond the wardrobe door
the word of grace rang clear
and stepping out of Narnia
you followed God's call here.

Along the way you found the one
to make your life complete,
but in a sudden, wrenching twist
death knocked you off your feet.

With many steps through lonely lands
you traced your troubled way,
providing comfort, hope and joy
much more than you could say.

You left your home and motherland
and journeyed here to stay;
while those you blessed, the Lord has blessed
and sped you on your way.

– Gilbert A Franke, 10/29/08