



BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

Pentecost 19

Proper 24 (C)

October 16, 2022

[RCL] Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7; Psalm 66:1-11; 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19

Jeremiah 31:27-34

The days are surely coming. The phrase itself feels ominous, scary even. As we look around at what fills our current days, chronic stress and fatigue, political divisiveness, social unrest, climate crisis, and ongoing pandemic (just to name a few), thinking about what future days will hold can feel like an exercise in exploring our own nightmares. Yet here in Jeremiah, we hear God confirming that indeed the days are surely coming, although they won't be filled with the terror and calamities that we fear. Instead, God promises that there will come a day when there are no more sour grapes, and the vineyard of Israel will be lush with fruit that grows from the seeds sowed from God's promise. We are reminded that while the history of God's relationship with the chosen of Israel is one of broken covenant, it is also a history of continued invitation and commitment to communion with one another. Grafted into that covenantal relationship, we are also invited into the promise of God. The days are surely coming, and though they may be ripe with the disasters and tragedies of life, so too will they be days when God proclaims: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

- What are your fears for the future, both immediate and long-term?
- What does God's promise of a future of redeemed relationship do to those fears?
- How might the belief in a future in which God calls out, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" affect and influence your present?

Psalm 119:97-104

What would it be like to have God's word, teaching, commandments, and law forever fresh on our minds? Is it even possible? With the constant demands of our work, our families, and our commitments that serve to stretch us too thin, perhaps we are tempted to say that there is simply a lack of possibility and plausibility for our minds to be ever-dwelling on God. The world moves faster than ever, and we are expected to keep up. As we hear the psalmist proclaim a love for God's law, saying: "All the day long it is in my mind," perhaps we silently nod along while we think to ourselves: "I just don't have the time..."

Yet if we allow it to be such, the psalmist extends an offering of a worldview that transcends and defines the constant demands that make up a life. A commitment to God is a lens and a lifestyle through which we

are called to engage, and such a commitment has a way of sorting out and prioritizing that which pulls us away from what is right and true. May we ascribe to follow the call of God's commandment, thus joining the psalmist in joyous proclamation that it is "always with me."

- How might mindful dwelling in God's commandments redefine, reorient, and reorganize your duties and responsibilities in life?
- What might you be called to reassess and reprioritize as part of that mindful dwelling?

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

Patience, but with urgency. Or perhaps it's more like urgent patience. Either way, the Christian call to proclaim the Gospel as defined in 2 Timothy is a call that necessitates an equal amount of force and grace. Indeed, the letter writer urges a persistent proclamation, one that will "convince, rebuke, and encourage." In the same breath, however, the letter's author instructs that all of this should be done "with the utmost patience in teaching." Such is the dual nature of the redemptive story of God through Jesus Christ, a story of abundant grace and radical commitment. The call of discipleship isn't a call of convenience or one that should be taken up to "suit their own desires," but rather a holy commission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in all times and all places. "Carry out your ministry fully," we are told—urgently, and with great patience.

- How can grace be present in urgency? How is grace present in patience?
- When have you experienced grace through either urgency or patience?
- How might you be called to pass that grace on through proclamation?

Luke 18:1-8

Jesus tells a story of a widow and a judge, and in so doing, speaks to the situation and circumstance of Luke's community, a post-Easter people awaiting the second coming and therefore negotiating in real-time what it meant to be followers of Christ. And not just followers of Christ, but followers of Christ living in a moment after Christ's resurrection but before the Parousia. The widow's insistence on communication ultimately leads to her receipt of justice, regardless of the judge's personal disregard, and serves as an example of the power of continued relationship. Luke's Jesus promises that if a judge with no interest in justice will grant it due to unrelenting petition, imagine what our almighty and gracious God can do for those who "pray always" and oblige themselves "not to lose heart." Fast-forward 2,000+ years and we too find ourselves in Luke's community: a post-Easter and pre-Parousia people. How do we exist in that reality? Luke's Jesus says to look no further than the widow and her willingness to take the continual risk of communicative relationship. Following her lead, we can answer the question, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" with a resounding, "Yes!" as we present those who took up the holy challenge to "pray always and not to lose heart."

- Have you ever felt that God answered a prayer? What was that like?
- Have you ever felt that God didn't answer a prayer? How?
- What does a commitment to prayer look like to you?

*This Bible study was written by **Andrew Gordon**, a seminarian at the Seminary of the Southwest.*

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