

***ctkAlive!* Scripture Study**

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020—A Cycle Readings



*Man worshipping at the
[Wailing Wall](#) in Jerusalem*

Source: [Freepix.com](#)

Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, we have added links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Leave the reflection and chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links.

Exception: In the course of the lesson, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.

Opening Prayer

A Prayer for Joy and Strength

by Meg Bucher *

(adapted for use here)

Father,
Praise You for these current lessons on strength and joy,
and for Paul's faithful life witness left behind
for me to learn from.
Father, You command me to be joyful always,
but You do not expect me to figure out
how to attain or retain that joy myself.
You gave Your Son Jesus to light the way for me
to a joy-filled life.
Through His earthly footsteps,
I study the example He left for me to follow.
Thank You for the Sacred Scriptures.

All of creation reminds me of You.
The beauty of nature and the marvel of changing seasons.
The uniqueness in all of us and diversity in the daily horizon.
Surround me with reminders of You, through nature,
and the people you place in our lives, and the Bible.
May the Holy Spirit help me to understand Your Word,
and Your will for my life.
Bless my heart with sustaining joy,
and with strength to hold onto it, no matter what.
I ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

* [Meg Bucher](#) encourages others to seek Jesus, first through her life as a stay-at-home mom, career as a freelance writer, teaching *Emoti-moms Weekly Bible Study*, and leading the kids worship teams at her local church. She resides in a small town with her husband, two daughters, and their Golden-doodle. Meg writes about everyday life within the love of Christ on her blog ([click on her name above](#)).

Introduction to the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time Scriptures

Zechariah 9: 9-10 — “Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion; shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem.” Zechariah taught the Hebrew slaves not to lose hope: the victory of God and the coming of his kingdom would take place in the midst of painful events.

When the Jews returned from exile in Babylon (in 520 B.C.), the prophet Zechariah took part in the restoration of God’s people first, then the temple. When Yahweh’s people returned from exile, they displayed immediate fervor and gratitude, Zechariah saw their rebuilding of the temple as a symbol: a *new age* had begun and the Lord prepared them for the day of his salvation. The prophet’s visions found in the first six chapters taught the Jews, who gathered round their destroyed temple, to be watchful and wait for the Day of the Lord. Sadly, generations that followed forgot the promises of the prophets, proclaimed during their captivity in Babylon. Thus, many of the promises failed to come true.

The second part of the Book of Zechariah, Chapters 9–14, are the work of another unnamed prophet who lived two centuries later.

Psalms 145: 1-2, 8-11, 13-14 — “I will praise your name forever, my king and my God.” David did not write this psalm. He lived five centuries before the Babylonian exile. This psalmist puts into verse and song what the returned exiles felt, as they took on the task of rebuilding the temple and their self-esteem as God’s chosen people.

Romans 8: 9, 11-13 — “Your existence is not in the flesh . . . you are in the spirit, because the Spirit of God is within you.” Paul theologizes the meaning of human existence. As he does so, he uses his own life story to show easy it is for people to let their flesh to take precedence over Spirit. Like the ancient Roman Christians—and

all others united in faith today—we too wage an interior-vs.-exterior battle in our daily lives.

Matthew 11: 25-30 — “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest. For my yoke is easy; and my burden is light.” At some point in their lives, every follower of Christ thinks God asks too much of us—at least, more than we think we can bear. Jesus tells us that his burden (“my yoke”) will never be more than we can handle—as long as we cling to him, especially in hard times (the corona virus restrictions, for example).

First Reading from the Book of the Prophet Zechariah (9: 9-10)

“Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout for joy, daughter of Jerusalem! For your king is coming, just and victorious, humble, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. No more chariots in Ephraim, no more horses in Jerusalem, for he will do away with them. The warrior’s bow shall be broken when he dictates peace to the nations. He will reign from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

Personal Reflection

Zechariah teaches the Jews they must not be afraid: Yahweh’s victory and the coming of his kingdom will take place in the midst of painful events in their lives and times.

This lesson seems especially timely today for stunned believers of all faiths. We can apply Zechariah’s theme of restoration after disaster to our return to whatever “normal” might look like for us, when the covid-19 virus fades into history.

— *How optimistic am I that this crisis will pass? What personal lessons am I learning during these long weeks that I’ll need to hold on to when my life “normalizes” again?*

The now-older and wiser Ezekiel predicts a different, less material-bound value system developing in Israel after the Babylonian exile: “No more chariots in Ephraim, no more horses in Jerusalem, for he will do away with them. The warrior’s bow shall be broken when he dictates peace to the nations.”— This sounds very much like Isaiah 2: 4. “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

— How has my personal “exile” during the pandemic impacted my values—who and what I love, my faith, and my commitment to my faith? What has changed, if anything, in my value system—the reordering of my priorities in life?

Antiphon: Psalm 145 (1-2, 8-11, 13-14)

I will praise your name forever, my king and my God.

I will extol you, my God and King;
I will praise your name forever.
I will praise you, day after day;
and exalt your name forever.

I will praise your name forever, my king and my God.

Compassionate and gracious is Yahweh,
slow to anger and abounding in love.
Yahweh is good to everyone;
his mercy embraces all his creation.
All your works will give you thanks;
all your saints, O Yahweh, will praise you.
They will tell of the glory of your kingdom;
and speak of your power.

I will praise your name forever, my king and my God.

Your reign is from age to age;
your dominion endures,
from generation to generation.
Yahweh is true to his promises
and lets his mercy show in all he does.
Yahweh lifts up those who are falling
and raises those who are beaten down.

I will praise your name forever, my king and my God.

Personal Reflection

Many Christians focus on the “wrath of God,” imposing a harsh, wrathful God image on their own life-view and pass that image to their children and grandchildren. In nearly all of the 150 psalms, the composer shows a wide variety of God-images. The verses quoted in Psalm 145 present the Jewish belief in a compassionate and forgiving Creator.

— *What do I find surprising, even comforting, when I reflect on God’s love for me as an individual? And not just for me but for every human being who walks the valleys and hikes the mountains of life?*

— *In the course of a “normal” day, how aware am I of God’s presence to me as “compassionate and gracious . . . slow to anger . . . abounding in love”? How might I deepen that awareness?*

Second Reading: From St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans (8: 9, 11-13)

“Your existence is not in the flesh, but in the spirit, because the Spirit of God is within you. If you did not have the Spirit of Christ, you would not belong to him. And, if the Spirit of him, who raised Jesus from the dead, is within you, he who raised Jesus Christ from among the dead, will also give life to your mortal bodies. Yes, he will do it, through his Spirit, who dwells within you. Then, brothers and sisters, let us leave the flesh and no longer live according to it. If not, we will die. Rather, walking in the Spirit, let us put to death the body’s deeds, so that we may live.”

Personal Reflection

At first glance, Paul *seems* to say to the Roman community: “You have to choose between life in the *body* and life in the *Spirit*. We can’t have it both ways. So, which will it be?” This might be why, in part, down through the centuries of Christianity, Paul gained an unfair reputation among the faithful for setting unrealistic expectations and being against all fun and enjoyment in life.

— *Putting myself in the shoes of a Roman Christian living in the first century AD/CE, how might I receive and interpret Paul’s words, since I know the great Apostle to the Gentiles only by reputation?*

— *How do I (living 2000 years after Paul) interpret his seemingly harsh “either-or” comparison of life in the body and life in the Spirit? How would I express the same conviction, but in softer words? Or should I?*

Proclamation from the Gospel Matthew (11: 25-30)

“On that occasion, Jesus said, ‘Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I praise you; because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to simple people. Yes, Father, this was your gracious will. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father; and no one knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my

yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest. For my yoke is easy; and my burden is light.”

Personal Reflection

These may or may not be Jesus’ *exact* words. Yet, this rather lengthy prayer to his Father made a sufficiently strong impression on his disciples, that Matthew included it in his gospel 20-30 years later.

— *Why did Jesus find more fertile ground in the hearts of “simple people” than in the hearts of Jewish scholars of the Law and the Prophets? What does this say about me and all the Christian education I received over the course of my life? How do I fit within Jesus’ category of “simple” people?*

— *If I do not find my “yoke easy” or my “burden light,” as Jesus promised, what did I miss along the way of living my Catholic life? What might I do now to change my thinking about Jesus’ words of comfort and compassion, mixed in with the cold, hard cold facts of life in the real world?*

Shelter-in-Place

(Leslie Dwight speaks wisely to all people around the world who eagerly await the end of the covid-19 crisis.)

The year we’ve been waiting for . . .

by Leslie Dwight

(adapted for use here)

What if 2020 isn’t cancelled?

What if 2020 is the year we’ve been waiting for?

A year so uncomfortable, so painful, so scary, so raw
that it finally *forces* me to grow.

A year that screams so loud, finally awakening me
from my ignorant slumber.

A year I finally accept the need for change.

Declare change. Work for change. Become the change.

A year I finally band together with others,
instead of pushing them farther apart.

2020 isn’t cancelled, but rather the most important year of them all.

— *Read the poem again—slowly. How does it resonate with you . . . today?*

Journaling Prompts

Take some time to write about the insights you've gained from reflecting on the readings for the 14th Sunday of Ordinary Time and on recent calls to end racial discrimination. Suggested prompts:

— *What is the first thought that comes to mind?*

No matter what our societal origin, some of us (many?/most?) grew up in homes where some form of "us-vs-them" bias existed. It may have had nothing to do with race or skin color. Take, for example, these labels: "hillbilly," "redneck," "retard," and other forms of bias against those seen as "different and lesser" than ourselves.

As Christians, we are expected to hold ourselves to the standard proclaimed by St. Paul in Galatians 3:28: *"There is no longer any difference between Jew or Greek, or between slave or freed, or between man and woman: but all of you are one, in Christ Jesus."* In that spirit, ask yourself:

— *To what extent have I "inherited" some form of deep-rooted bigotry from my grandparents, parents, schools, close friends? (Be honest with yourself, for yourself.)*

We mustn't simply be grateful "recipients" of God's good gifts. We need to be "givers," too.

— *What difference will this week's Scriptures and current societal events make in how I think, live, love—and "give back"—during the week ahead?*

Questions

Feel free to send any questions or comments you might have to ctkAlive@ctkph.org

Preview of Next Session

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 55: 10-11 "The word that goes forth from my mouth: will not return to me idle, but it shall accomplish my will."

Psalms 65: 10-14 "The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest."

Romans 8: 18-23 "I consider that the suffering of our present life cannot be compared with the glory that will be revealed and given to us."

Matthew 13: 1-23 (or 1-9) “The sower went out to sow . . . some seeds fell along the path . . . other seed fell on rocky ground . . . other seeds fell among the thistles . . . still other seed fell on good soil. . . .

For Inspirational Viewing/Listening/Reading

Book:

Forgiving Day by Day by Judith Ingram

A wonderfully written yet highly down-to-earth call for forgiveness on the part of wounded souls—like most of us—due to childhood abuse of any kind—emotional, sexual, spiritual, et al. The author admits that, in her early life, she fit into some of these unfortunate categories. Now a professional counselor and spiritual guide, her voice rings true. Ingram is the perfect guide through this process.

Songs:

[My Yoke is Easy](#) words and music by [John Michael Talbot](#)

Talbot’s personal website is [Troubadour for the Lord](#).

He is a Best-Selling Author of over 30 books, and the Founder and General Minister of the Catholic based community The Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

[My Yoke is Easy](#) words and music by Dennis L. Jernigan

Video:

Bishop Robert Barron seems to have a video on every possible topic related to faith and society. This 9-minute YouTube video is worth watching (of course, or it wouldn’t be recommended here).

[Bishop Robert Barron on Bill Maher and Biblical Interpretation](#)

Closing Reflection

This week you’ll be doing something different. Below is a 3-minute, narrated [reflection](#) On YouTube, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Source [God’s Poetry Productions](#)

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(follow the link above to the novel *Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words*)