

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR OCTOBER 18, 2020

Isaiah 45:1-7

- Cyrus is the Persian emperor who will allow the Israelites to go back to their homeland from their exile. The word used here for “his anointed” is also the word for “messiah” or “Christ.” If we apply these same words to Jesus, what does this metaphorically say about the way Jesus works in our lives?
- God here speaks of working through this foreign leader of Cyrus – “though you do not know me.” God works beyond the church. We are called to look for God’s Spirit at work in our community and world and how we might be a part of it. What would we consider signs of God’s Spirit at work? Given what those signs might be, where do you see God at work outside of the church?

Psalms 96

- What does it mean to “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness”? Is it the beauty of God? Or the beauty of our own holiness?
- When the psalmist speaks of God’s judgment, such judgment is seen as a cause for celebration— a contrast to how many churches see God’s judgment. The psalmist praises God for the judgment, because “you will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with your truth,” or – as The Message words it – “[God] comes to set everything right on earth, set everything right, treat everyone fair.” If we are on the side of justice and truth, the judgment of God becomes a cause of celebration because all will be set right.
- In verse 3, we hear a word that we associate with God throughout Scripture: “glory.” This is the same word that verses 7 and 8 translates as “honor.” But what do we mean by the word “glory”? How do we declare it? The Hebrew word *kabowd* originally meant “weight,” leading to its association with “abundance,” as in the weight of riches. For this reason, when the psalmist speaks of “glory,” we also hear him speak of “splendor” and “magnificence” (verse 6). What would happen if we substituted the word “abundance” for “glory”? Then, to “declare God’s glory” would mean to speak about God’s abundance, to speak about how God richly showers us with all that we have and all that we are. Then, to ascribe or recognize God by such honor, such glory, such abundance, leads naturally to giving to God out of that abundance. Where do you see God’s abundance? How does that lead you to respond?

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

- These few short verses demonstrate the pattern for how Paul typically wrote an epistle:
 - 1) A list of senders, sometimes with a description (“Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy”);
 - 2) A list of addressees, sometimes with a description (“To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”);
 - 3) A greeting (“Grace to you and peace”); and
 - 4) A Thanksgiving (“We always give thanks to God for all of you ...”).
- What was the Thessalonian church known for? Their reputation is not about what they say or believe but about how those words are shown in power and in what kind of people they are.
- If the word about our church was sounded forth, what would we be known for? What would we be called to work on?

Matthew 22:15-22

- Jesus’ response to this trick question can be taken in several ways: “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” What do you think this means? What belongs to the emperor/government? What belongs to God?
- Taking this one step further, what does it mean to give to God that which is God’s?