

## COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR AUGUST 29, 2021

### Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

- We believe that Deuteronomy was the book “found” (or written?) during repairs in the Temple during the reign of King Josiah (2 Kings 22-23). Because of what was written in Deuteronomy, a major reform in the worship life of the nation of Judah took place.
- This passage emphasizes not just the necessity of keeping the law. It also tells why following the law is important:
  - Observing the law shows wisdom and discernment to themselves and to others around them – how does this observation show that wisdom and discernment?
  - The law and its observance shows how near a god the Lord God is –how does the law accomplish this?

### Psalm 15

- From a Lutheran standpoint, we must caution against reading this list a series of requirements – what must I do to be saved? Rather, we look at this list as the type of behavior that comes from our realization of God’s love and grace for us. As you dwell on this list, what is easier for you to do? Where do you struggle?
  - Speak truth from your heart – what does this mean?
  - Do no slander with your tongue.
  - Do no evil to your friends nor cast discredit upon a neighbor.
  - Do not take back your word.
  - Do not give money in hope of gain (elsewhere it is worded, “who do not lend money at interest”).

### James 1:17-27

- In his preface to the New Testament, Luther declared that James is “really an epistle of straw, ... for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it.” Luther understood the book as promoting a “works righteousness” rather than a righteousness based on God’s grace. That being said, note where grace forms a foundation in this passage for the rest of the book:
  - “Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above.”
  - “he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits”
  - “welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls”
- Scholars consider the book of James as the wisdom book of the New Testament. The first chapter seems to act as a list of topics to be discussed throughout the rest of the book. As with the Psalm, consider the following exhortations in our passage. Which one is easier for you to do? Which one is a struggle?
  - Be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.
  - Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers.
  - Bridle your tongues.
  - Care for orphans and widows in distress.

### Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

- In the first lesson, we hear the command to observe the law “diligently,” neither adding to nor taking away from that which has been commanded. Yet, here in the gospel lesson, Jesus dismisses many of the statutes on food and cleanliness as “human tradition.” How do you reconcile the two passages? As we read scripture, how do we determine what in the law is to be followed and what is time- and culture-bound?
- When are we guilty of “teaching human precepts as doctrines”? When are we guilty of abandoning “the commandment of God” while holding on “to human tradition”?