

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR SEPTEMBER 18, 2022

Amos 8:4-7

- This is a perfect example of what biblical prophecy means: a specific word from God for a specific time and place. Note what is condemned here: injustice and oppression. The poor and needy are cheated by corrupt business practices. And it is done by “good religious folk,” ones who observe new moon festivals and Sabbaths! If we used modern terms for these words, this passage is about those who go to church on Sunday and act un-Christ-like on Monday! When have you been guilty of that? What helped you to change your ways?

Psalm 113

- God’s concern for the poor and neglected appear not just in the prophets (like Amos in our first lesson), but also in the psalms. We are invited here to see what God is like, so that we may be shaped into people that God wants us to be. If God is the one who “takes up the weak out of the dust and lifts up the poor from the ashes,” then how should we be with the weak and the poor?

1 Timothy 2:1-7

- In the letters of Paul we see a consistent call to obey and pray for those in authority. Another example comes from Romans 13:1 – “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.” Keep in mind that Paul here refers to the Roman emperors, who often were corrupt. These verse have been used to justify doing nothing when a government is oppressive and acts unjustly. Yet, we also know our tendency to ignore these verses as we complain and not respect those in power who are not of our political persuasion. How do we determine when we need to act against a government and when we should quietly submit to it? How should we act?

Luke 16:1-13

- This is perhaps the most difficult parables of Jesus to understand. Consider the scenario that Jesus describes. When a rich man is ready to fire a manager who “was squandering his property,” what does the manager do? He basically cheats the master further by changing what the debtors of the manage owe, reasoning that the debtors will then like him and help him when he is fired. And the rich man commends the manager for doing this!! What does this mean? When Jesus goes further, he seemingly offers up four different morals or meanings:
 - “for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light” – in other words, they know how to use money to help others even if it is for their own benefit?
 - “make friends for yourselves by means of the dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes” – in other words, when faced with your own “firing”/death, give away what you have to those who need it?
 - “Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest in much.” - ??
 - “No slave can serve two masters You cannot serve God and wealth.” – when faced with you firing/death, what is going to motivate you?