

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR MAY 11, 2025

Acts 9:36-43

- Acts is the only book in the New Testament that names women as disciples. In fact, the verse here about Tabitha/Dorcas (9:36) is the only place in the New Testament in which the feminine form of the word “disciple” is found. Indeed, it is rarely found in Greek literature as a whole. (Although in Romans 16:7, Paul refers to Junia as “pre-eminent among the apostles.”) This episode indicates the significant presence of women leaders within the early church.
- Tabitha/Dorcas stands as a powerful witness to what faithful living might mean. With her death, “all the widows” gather and show Peter the clothing she made for them. Keep in mind that widows often were on the bottom of the economic ladder in this society, so providing them clothes is meeting their needs. She challenges us to consider how we might be remembered by the people around us.
- This story also illustrates how the disciples live out the power of Jesus. As Jesus will say to Jairus’s daughter, “Child, get up!” (Luke 8:54), so Peter says to Tabitha/Dorcas, “Tabitha, get up.” (Acts 9:40). The acts of Jesus or the disciples are not meant to be remnants of a distant past. They are meant to show the spiritual power of faith that we live into.

Psalms 23

- This psalm has been a favorite for many, particularly at funerals. Why do you think that is? What does this psalm mean to you? What does it mean to call God your shepherd?
- Reflect on the following verse: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me.” When have you felt God’s presence in your darkest times?
- What does the psalmist mean when he says, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies”? Is it meant as a gloating before enemies? Or is it as an invitation to one’s enemies?

Revelation 7:9-17

- When reading this section of Revelation, it is important to know the verses that precede it:
“And ***I heard*** the number of those who were sealed, ***one hundred and forty-four thousand***, sealed out ***of every tribe of the people of Israel***: From the tribe of Judah twelve thousand sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, ... *[etc.]*” (Revelation 7:4-5)
Focusing especially on the highlighted words, compare this group with the group in today’s lesson in 7:9-10. What do these differences tell us?
- These words (along with similar words in Revelation 21:3-4) also are used in funerals. Yet, John speaks them to encourage those being persecuted. How might these words comfort and encourage John’s hearers?
- As with last week’s lessons, these words should sound familiar to us, as they are used in our liturgy, especially in the Hymn of Praise. By using these words in worship, we are invited to see ourselves as participants in the drama found in Revelation, not as a future hope but as a present reality.

John 10:22-30

- The “festival of Dedication” is what we now know as Hanukkah, which celebrates the re-dedication of the Temple around 168 BC. Is the following passage connected to that Festival? Different scholars have different opinions. If it is, then the connection comes with an understanding of Hanukkah as the celebration of a new age.
- What Jesus says to the Jewish leaders is that faith is necessary in order to see the works of God. The leaders do not understand the works of Jesus because they do not believe. St. Augustine put it this way, “I believe in order that I may understand.” What is it that we believe? It is that Jesus and the Father are one. If you want to know who God is, look at Jesus.

