

Pentecost 8A - Comments/questions on the lessons for July 19, 2026

Isaiah 44:6-8

- As we read these words, it is important to remember that they come from Second Isaiah, written during the Babylonian Exile. They are not meant as words of judgment. Rather, they are meant to reassure the people that God will do as God says. If God says there is hope, then they can know that there is hope. If God says that they will be restored, then they will be restored. For us, these words remind us to keep ourselves centered on the God who is moving in the world and to be a part of that movement.

Alternate passage: Wisdom of Solomon 12:13, 16-19

*For neither is there any god besides you whose care is for all people,
to whom you should prove that you have not judged unjustly,*

*...¹⁶ For your strength is the source of righteousness,
and your sovereignty over all causes you to spare all.*

*¹⁷ For you show your strength when people doubt the completeness of your power,
and you rebuke any insolence among those who know it.*

*¹⁸ Although you are sovereign in strength, you judge fairly,
and with great forbearance you govern us,*

for you have power to act whenever you choose.

*¹⁹ Through such works you have taught your people
that the righteous must be kind,
and you have filled your children with good hope,
because you give repentance for sins.*

- Wisdom is a book that Protestants call Apocrypha, but Roman Catholics call Bible in their Old Testament. It is written in Greek, likely in Alexandria, Egypt. We are not certain about when it was written, but it is believed to be written sometime between the 3rd and the 1st centuries, BC. The book suggests that it was written by Solomon, using some of his stories like his prayer of wisdom and the building of the temple as examples of wisdom to follow.
- The passage is used here as God is portrayed as one to not simply destroy Israel's enemies but is willing to wait to see if they repent.

Psalms 86:11-17

- In this section of the psalm, the psalmist asks God to continue to teach his ways to him and to continue to show mercy to him even in the midst of those who persecute him. The psalmist asks God to let God's compassion and grace toward him be evident to others. How is God's compassion and grace evident in your life? Do other people see that evidence when you are with them?

Romans 8:12-25

- Though verse 18 is often seen as a reference to a life to come, Paul believes the glory about to be revealed is a this-worldly occurrence. The Greek in this passage is perhaps best translated as "the glory about to be revealed in us." We have here a promise that God is at work, even when we are overwhelmed by our suffering. This hope is not just for ourselves alone, it is a hope for the "whole creation." Where do we need to hear that word of hope?

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

- A farming observation: the weeds that Jesus refers to – known as "tares" – were indistinguishable from the wheat when both are young. It is only as the wheat matures that one can tell the difference between the two. Even if wheat and tares refers to distinct people, a message of this parable is that we cannot tell the difference. Only God can when the harvest comes. We are not to judge!
- But does the parable refer to people? If it does, then I struggle with the judgment implicit with this parable. Because am I so confident that I am not so "weedy"? If it refers to parts of ourselves, then I am more comfortable if not more challenged by this. The parable then says that I am a mix of good and bad, virtue and vice, that one day will be sorted out with the vice burned away and the virtue shining "like the sun." As Luther says, "At the same time I am both saint and sinner."