

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LESSONS FOR JULY 5, 2026

Zechariah 9: 9-12

- Zechariah is written during the Babylonian Exile, likely around 520-518 BC. His name means “God remembered,” which is significant because we hear reassurances from him that God has remembered God’s people and would restore them. We hear this especially in this passage with the promise that they would be repaid double and that the new kingdom will stretch from sea to sea.
- The gospels quote this passage when Jesus enters Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. Both in Zechariah’s description of the coming king and in its use in the gospels the donkey emphasizes the humility that the king ought to have. As you think of leaders, can you name an example of humility?
- The phrase “prisoner of hope” could mean either a prisoner that possesses hope or one who is imprisoned by hope. What would it mean to think of us as captured by or imprisoned by hope?

Psalm 145:8-14

- The psalm invites us to think of what God has done for us and what God wishes to do with us. When you think about what God has done in your life, how does that encourage you to be today?
- The psalm presents God as “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” We hear this same description in Jonah 4:2, “for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing.” But it contrasts with the prophet Nahum, who will speak of God in this way: “The Lord is slow to anger but great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty.” (Nahum 1:3) In our anger we often want to shape God according to our anger and resentment. The psalm calls us to be shaped instead by God’s love and compassion.

Romans 7:15-25a

- Paul here presents us with the contradictory nature of ourselves. We want to do good, but we keep finding ourselves doing the evil we were meant to avoid. Only by admitting the vicious cycle we get caught in and confessing our helplessness can we realize the power of God’s grace through Jesus.
- Paul’s description here matches the first four steps of any 12-step program:
 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

- What gets left off this passage:

Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done, because they did not repent. ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, on the day of judgement it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you.’

Why would the lectionary leave off this passage? How do we understand the judgment pronounced in these words? Who are the words directed toward?

- The first part of our lesson presents these Jewish leaders as not being satisfied with anything. They are so caught up in their own judgments that they cannot see the working of God in front of them. Jesus challenges them – and us – to see where the Spirit of God might be revealed in unexpected ways.
- Jesus ends this passage with familiar words. He speaks this comfort to a people who have been dismissed by the “good religious folk.” But what does it mean to take on the “yoke” of Jesus? How can a yoke be easy? Or does Jesus mean that we are yoked together with him, carrying it with him?