

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 08 – Year B

RCL Readings¹ – Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15, 2:23-24 or Lamentations 3:22-33; Psalm 30; II Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43

ACNA Readings – Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Psalm 112; II Corinthians 8:1-15; Mark 5:22-43

Seasonal Introduction. The Christian calendar revolves around two principal feasts: Christmas (involving Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany) and Easter (involving Lent, Easter, and Pentecost). Then there is a large section in the middle called ordinary time. This season often focuses on the growth of the Church, ending in a season known as Kingdombtide which concludes with the feast of Christ the king. During this time we read and hear the bulk of the teachings of Jesus in relation to the kingdom of heaven and how we are called to live as disciples of the Messiah.²

Common Theme. “Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain-curtain of this world rolls back, and all turns to silver glass, and then you see it.” —J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*. Death is something we all must face and no gluten-free vegan diet, exercise program, or amount of money can help us avoid it. Faith takes death very seriously. The Bible does not avoid the topic but rather reveals its origin, its future, and God's power over it. God is life, and in Him there is no death. The readings this week have much to say about death and God's sovereign power. Because death is something that we all must face, it can be a comfort to know and to be reminded that Jesus is the Living One. He faced death in His daily ministry and also suffered it personally, and He overcame all of it. That great adversary that comes to everyone has been defeated.

Hebraic Context. In the Jewish-Christian tradition the soul of the individual continues to live on after death. The Hebrew Scriptures describe a place called Sheol (sometimes translated as pit or grave) to where the souls go ‘down’ after they depart from the deceased body. According to Jewish tradition it is from there the souls await the עולם הבא ‘*World to Come*’, the Hebraic term for the hereafter.

The concept of waiting for the next world forms the basis of the doctrine of purgatory, the source of which is actually Jewish.³ The term the עולם הבא ‘*World to Come*’ is not explicitly mentioned in

¹ Alternative RCL Reading: II Samuel 1:1, 1-27; Psalm 130

² Usually from the Synoptic Gospels. This year, year B, the Gospel of Mark is studied. We also study passages with similar themes to the Gospel or go through several books of the Bible (largely from I Samuel-I Kings and the writings from Proverbs, Job, and Ruth in the Alternate reading of year B).

³ Knowledge about death and the afterlife, heaven and hell was not revealed in Genesis, indeed, much of our knowledge doesn't come until quite late in the Scriptures such as in Daniel before the 2nd Temple period and Revelation at the end of the 2nd Temple period. This meant that the theology of Abraham, David, and even many of the prophets concerning death and resurrection may not have been developed with the full understanding of God's revelation. Paul had to write the Thessalonians to help them understand the doctrine and reality of the resurrection. But even though Abraham and David did not have

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 08 – Year B

the Hebrew Bible but the concept developed during the 2nd Temple Period. Jewish exegesis of Genesis notes how in the beginning the Creation account details how God made things in couples. There was heaven and earth, night and day, darkness and light, male and female. By extension it was implied that He also made this world עולם הזה and the next world עולם הבא.⁴

The world to come is thought to be a future world, not dissimilar to our present world. The new world will function much like this one, with such things as we find here: oxygen, gravity, food, animals, and plants.⁵ The vision of the world to come is one of a perfected world that follows the coming of the Messiah.

In Judeo-Christian theology, death is not the end of life.⁶ There is a saying in the Talmud that says; כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא 'All Israel has a share in the World to Come' with a discussion that immediately proceeds to discuss the exceptions and who actually doesn't inherit eternal life. Death was introduced into the Creation at the Fall of Man but it will be removed in the Messianic age and have no power in the world to come.⁷

Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15, 2:23-24.⁸ The portion begins with the definitive statement that "God did not make death." Contrary to popular evolutionary science, the orthodox theological view is that death is not a natural part of the world. Wisdom of Solomon goes on to say that

a full theological understanding about the resurrection, Jesus noted that both Abraham and David are alive.

⁴ Note that life and death are not a pairing as God has always existed and He is life.

⁵ In the revelation to John he sees into heaven and writes; "After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands". Palm trees, at the least, seem to be readily available in the world to come.

⁶ See also Hebrew Perspective.

⁷ See Louis Ginzeberg *Legends of the Jews* for additional material regarding esoteric aggadic related Gan Eden, Paradise, and the new earth of the Messiah that developed during the 2nd Temple period.

⁸ On occasion, the lectionary includes texts from the Apocrypha. Apocryphal books are not included in the masoretic (traditional) Hebrew Bible, but they are included in the Greek Septuagint and Latin versions of the Old Testament. This tension over their deuterocanonical status means that their usage in Christian tradition has been somewhat ambiguous since the Reformation, and their use is often based upon the history of the particular denomination.

The Wisdom of Solomon is a work of the late Second Temple period (and so not written by Solomon, making it one of the Pseudepigrapha, 'falsely attributed' books). This was a common genre of late 2nd Temple literature in which material was produced in the name of an ancient historical figure. These texts give us a glimpse into the theology of the world of Jesus as they were written in the centuries preceding and proceeding the time of Jesus and the Apostles. The Wisdom of Solomon is commonly thought to be written only a few years after Jesus' death and before a large part of Acts took place. According to Article 6 of the 39 Articles of Religion, the book is not considered to be in the canon of Scripture but is useful to be read for example of life and instruction.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 08 – Year B

"God does not delight in death nor did he create things so that they could die. He created them so that they might exist."

Death was introduced into the creation and was not an inherent part of it. We were created in God's image and God has no death or decay in him. Paul states in Romans 5:12, "...sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."⁹ God wanted us to choose life. And we have that chance to choose life, for the resurrection has brought victory over death—even if death still abides in this world for a time. Revelation 20:14 states that the last things to be cast into the eternal fire will be Death and Hades.

Lamentations 3:22-33.^{10 11} Lamentations 3 is an incredibly well-crafted abecedary poem reflecting a lament at divine punishment. Lamentations 3:1-18 along with 19-21 make up the first seven letters. God himself stood against the author, this was the reality of the disaster, but in remembering these things there was also hope. Our passage comes in the second set of seven letters, Jeremiah 3:22-42. God is merciful and faithful. God will not continuously punish those who return to the LORD, but in remembering these things there is also the knowledge that, in transgression and rebellion, forgiveness had not yet occurred. The final eight letters go back and forth between despair and hope.

Great is Thy Faithfulness is a favorite hymn sung by Christians since 1923.¹² However, few understand that these beautiful verses of hope, comfort, and security are in the context of the author of Lamentation being at their lowest point, "My soul continually remembers [the wormwood and the gall] and is bowed down within me."¹³ God is faithful—He was faithful in the past and God was also faithful in the present. Unfortunately, the song is, perhaps, more popular than the book it came from. We are all happy to sing of God's faithfulness in mercy. But less

⁹ There are many genres in the Bible. Poetry and allegory are both common and many, even within the Christian world, read the beginning of Genesis as poetic or allegorical. However, this can lead to a question of where the fall of man and death came from if Adam and Eve did not exist as real people and rebel against God.

¹⁰ Tradition states that Jeremiah, expressing his despair, doubt, and hope concerning the personal and national fate of Israel, wrote the book of Lamentations. There are no internal or external sources to show who the author was except these traditions. Today, Lamentations is read on *Tisha b'Av*, the day of great mourning when the Temples were destroyed—along with many other calamities for the Jewish people.

¹¹ Lamentations is divided into four abecedary poems and a fifth poem of synonymous parallelism (which may also have hints of an acrostic). The first, second, and fourth poems all start with the question "how" (איכה, the name of the book in Hebrew). The third poem, Lamentations 3, is a triple abecedary poem that distinguishes itself by making a statement rather than a question, "אני הגבר" I am the man.

¹² *Great is Thy Faithfulness* became popular almost immediately after being written by Thomas Chisholm through Moody Bible Institute's president Dr. William Henry Houghton and Billy Graham.

¹³ The sons of Korah, in Psalm 44:25, use the same phrase to describe their own affliction, "For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly clings to the ground."

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 08 – Year B

happy to declare that God is faithful in being an enemy of those who continue to transgress and rebel—these He does not forgive.

God's people had not adhered to His instructions. In their disobedience, death, destruction, and exile was brought upon themselves. Yet within the misery and death there was still life and hope. "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that he should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord". In the sacred history of Israel the author knew that God had been good in the past, perhaps His mercies would once again dawn fresh in the future.

Psalm 30. David knew what it was to have enemies and to live with death as a constant companion. David was a king (a very dangerous profession to have) and a military commander (only a slightly less dangerous profession to have) who fought giants and was forced to flee from enemies and supposed allies alike. David also knew that he was not immortal and that, pragmatically, all things would die in this world. In fact, David would not even be at the dedication of the Temple.¹⁴ It was to be built by his son, Solomon. David mimics the Psalm of his companion, Heman, when he asked, "What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?"¹⁵ But David had a promise about the future and the dedication of the Temple would be one proof that God had been faithful.

With death always present in his life, God promised that He would establish David's family. This included the building of the Temple by Solomon. And so, even after his death, the dust would praise God and tell of His faithfulness as David's psalm was sung at the dedication of the temple.¹⁶

¹⁴ This Psalm may have been a prayer of David after he was established in Jerusalem or it could be a prayer of David looking forward to the building of the Temple by his son. שִׁיר חֲנֻכַּת הַבַּיִת לְדָוִד can read, "A song at the dedication of the house of David". However, הַבַּיִת (ha'bayit) "the house" is another term for the Temple. *Midrash Tehillim* 30.1 clearly reads it as the Temple. 'A Song at the dedication of the House, a Psalm of David.'

¹⁵ In Psalm 88, Heman proved that even from the edge of the pit—even from Abaddon—praises could ring true of the faithfulness of God. For Heman was a descendant of Korah who, along with all who stayed beside Korah, were swallowed up by the very earth. But at least one of the sons of Korah left his side to deliberately walk across the open ground to declare his allegiance to God (and Moses), otherwise we would not have the Psalms of the sons of Korah. Not only did Heman have a distant connection to God's faithfulness in the midst of death, he had a close connection to it. Heman was the son of Joel and the grandson of Samuel the prophet. Joel was someone who had walked away from God and, as was proven by the sons of Aaron and the sons of Eli, this could easily result in death and the end of that line. And yet Joel's son could stand at the gate of the temple and sing the dawn Psalms.

¹⁶ Some commentators read this as a prophetic understanding of the resurrection but, in context (like Heman), David is reflecting on the present and near future event of the dedication of the Temple (or possibly even more present dedication of his own house). While we do not know what all the patriarchs and Israel knew about God, at the time of David the Bible did not speak much about the underworld or

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Proper 08 – Year B

God kept David alive, restored him to life, and prospered him—and not only David. The house of God would be built and David wanted everyone present to sing praises to the LORD. Others would feel God's anger along with sadness, but if God could turn even David's mourning to dancing then surely others would also feel God's favour. And, today, we know that God is truly the God of the living and that David has been able to continue to sing God's praises and give Him thanks.

II Corinthians 8:7-15.¹⁷ The apostle Paul had been comparing the poor northern communities in Macedonia with the wealthier southern communities of Corinth as he took up a collection in support of the Jerusalem community. Earlier, Paul asked the Corinthians to respond to both himself and to God with an open heart, even if they must face hardships. Here, Paul continued by referencing the Macedonians, who, though they were poorer, responded with surprising generosity. The Macedonians already faced some of the tests that Paul warned the Corinthians would be coming and were overjoyed to give for the needy in Jerusalem. Now it was time for the richer Corinthian church to also make good on their promises to assist the believers in Jerusalem.

There is no direct command to give financial aid in the New Testament. Being forced to give something is more akin to taxation than to the act of generosity. However, there are commands to love the community of Christ. Paul stated in II Corinthians 8:8 that he was testing the Corinthian believers to prove that their love was genuine. Paul continued by reminding the Corinthians of the generosity of Jesus and how much Jesus gave up for them.¹⁸ The pattern of generosity came from God Himself but is also often shown by those who are in poverty and who are afflicted. Paul would remind us that, while not legally commanded, we are morally obligated to be sincere in our love—that is, we must accompany our love with actions. In this case, to be generous to those in need.

Mark 5:21-43. Following a declaration of Jesus' power over the chaos of nature and then the power of demons, Mark immediately declared that Jesus had power over decay and death in the two stories from Mark 5:21-43. Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue came to Jesus, came to

what happened beyond the grave. Those places where there is mention of the dead praising the Lord doesn't seem to be a commentary about heaven, rather that God had physically saved someone from death and they could continue to praise the Lord in life. Death was a very real and, seemingly, permanent enemy that was opposite to the God of life. Yet neither should we diminish that the Psalm ends with a reference to David praising the LORD his God forever.

¹⁷ ACNA Reading: II Corinthians 8:1-15

¹⁸ Paul, in Acts 20:35 quotes Jesus saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This particular quote isn't in the Gospels, but John is very clear that not everything Jesus said or did was recorded by the Gospel writers.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 08 – Year B

Jesus and asked Him to come heal his daughter through laying on of hands.^{19 20} His plea, full of expectant faith, did not fall on deaf ears.

As Jesus went to continue His healing ministry, a crowd gathered around him—pushing in. In their midst, a woman with an issue of blood decided that she too would come to Jesus. This issue of blood made her ritually unclean and, according to the Scriptures, anything or anyone she touched would also become unclean.²¹ She clearly had faith in God and realized that God was acting through Jesus. Jesus even declared, “Your faith has made you well”.

But the belief was not what healed her alone—she wasn't healed before she touched Jesus, although she clearly had faith in God. It was when she acted in faith, reaching out and touching the corner of Jesus' garment, that she was healed. This wasn't unusual, as seen in Luke 6:19, for just touching Jesus allowed many to be healed. Uncleanliness and impurity were contagious but, interestingly, there was something about Jesus that was also contagious—removing the symbol of death without His even trying, for he turned having perceived “in Himself that power had gone out from Him.”²² Jesus ultimately conquered death.

Before Jesus even arrived at Jairus' house, his daughter had already been declared dead. However, upon hearing Jesus' words, Jairus did not dismiss the travelling healer but allowed Him to enter his house. Jesus did not struggle with raising the young girl, He simply told her to rise. She did. And, as somehow became a custom to showcase that someone was truly alive, the young girl was given something to eat.

Mark is careful to point out similarities between the daughter of Jairus, who was at the point of death, and the unnamed woman of great faith. Both were called daughter. The daughter of Jairus, having lived for 12 years died because of the curse of death that all men must face

¹⁹ The title of Rabbi was not in common use in the time of Jesus and were not in charge of the synagogues. The Bible mentions no other rabbis in the Gospels nor in the book of Acts. The movement that we now call Rabbinic Judaism started in the 2nd century C.E. and rabbis, or even proto-rabbis, only began to emerge in the Jewish world at the time of Jesus.

²⁰ Laying on of hands was commonly associated with healing during 2nd Temple Judaism.

²¹ Uncleanliness was seen as a symbol of decay and death, something God is not and will not have in His presence. And so, many commentators are quick to point out that this lady would have been ostracized from society as those she came into contact with would have had to go through the rituals to purify themselves. However, others point out that she seems to have an understanding of Malachi 4:2 as she wanted to touch the corner of Jesus' garment—meaning she had access to study. She also had access to multiple physicians, meaning she likely had money. But neither money nor learning remove the shroud of death that this world groans under.

²² In reference to the tools in the Tabernacle, Exodus 30:29 states, “You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them will become holy.” On the other hand, Haggai 2:12-13 states that holy things don't universally make everything that touches them holy, occasionally the unclean can make the holy also unclean.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 08 – Year B

(before being raised by Jesus). The unnamed woman, whom Jesus called daughter, had been under the curse of death for 12 years before she too was raised to a full life by Jesus.²³

Hebraic Perspective. In some of the oldest texts of the Bible death is described as 'lying down in the earth'.²⁴ Lying down to sleep became a metaphor for death, for when someone was asleep they lay down, they did not move nor could they get up, and they were unaware of their surroundings and unable to defend themselves. Essentially, they looked and acted like the dead.²⁵

This metaphor of sleep and death entered the prayer life of the Jewish people in Psalm 13:3, "Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." It also appears in the prophets, such as Jeremiah 51:38-40, "They shall roar together like lions... While they are inflamed I will prepare them a feast and make them drunk, that they may become merry, then sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake, declares the LORD. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter..." Jesus and Paul both used the metaphor of sleep to describe people who were deceased such as with Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:39-43) and even more clearly with Lazarus (John 11:11:-14). Paul used sleep as a metaphor for death when talking of the resurrection in I Thessalonians 4:13-17.

But was death considered to be all there was? As it states in Ecclesiastes 9:5, "but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward." Obviously we've read Mark 5, Jairus' daughter rose from her sleep. So did Lazarus. So will all the saints. The fact that death was likened to sleep wasn't just the appearance of death in sleep, but also to the understanding that life continues after death. How so? From the observation that people eventually wake up from sleep. The implication that we will all eventually awaken from death. Daniel 12:2 follows this argument, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."²⁶

²³ This isn't to say there is a formula to healing. Both were healed in different ways: one by her faithful actions—reaching out to touch Jesus; the other without any knowledge of what was happening when Jesus spoke and raised her to life. Or, if there is a formula, it is that God defeats death—for in Him is life.

²⁴ Job 7:21 states, "For now I shall lie in the earth; you will seek me, but I shall not be." In Genesis 47:30, Jacob asked Joseph to let him lie down with his fathers and to bury him in their burying place.

²⁵ This understanding was not novel to Israel: Egyptians provided beds and headrests for the dead; the Greeks understood death and sleep to be twins; while some Mesopotamians understood a corpse to be in a deep sleep.

²⁶ Even while we sleep, we can praise God. Psalm 16:7 says, "I will praise the Lord, who counsels me" and this is poetically attached to "even at night my heart instructs me." The word for heart, *kilya*, is the word used for kidneys (since English translations would not make sense to say kidney, they often used heart, mind, or inmost being as an appropriate translation). Something deep within us continues to praise God and teach us even when we sleep. And, as David said in Psalm 30:12, "O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!" Even after death.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 08 – Year B

Death is never the end in Jewish tradition, there is always the promise of resurrection and a life in the world to come. Jesus taught using a parable about the dead (Luke 16:19-31). Lazarus and the rich man continued to be fully aware of the present world and were even able to communicate with each other. In the afternoon prayers, the Jewish people pray three times of God's power to resurrect the dead, "You are the resurrector of the dead" and follow that with "Resurrector of the dead with great mercy" and again, "Blessed are You, O LORD, resurrector of the dead." What is not spoken of much in Jewish tradition is the ability of people to raise others from the dead.

There is a Talmudic story of two rabbis who also had the gift of healing and healed by touching people by the hand.²⁷ But they could only heal the living. Jesus was able to heal those already asleep—those who had passed on beyond this present world. He also had the power to take up His own life. Jesus said, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" (John 10:18). It is important to remember that Jesus wasn't only resurrected—He is the resurrection and the life!

ACNA Readings

Deuteronomy 15:7-11. The Deuteronomy passage connects to the II Corinthians 8:1-15 regarding generosity towards the poor. Compassion for the poor and disenfranchised were considered to be part of the duties of the ruling monarch, or possibly priestly elite, in the ancient world. Kings, as the central government, would sometimes spend portions of their tax wealth on social welfare (much like we do today). Ancient kings also could issue proclamations cancelling debts and the like. But Moses placed the obligation to be generous with the poor on everyone and not just the social elites.

²⁷ "Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba, fell ill. Rabbi Yoḥanan entered to visit him, and said to him: Is your suffering dear to you? Do you desire to be ill and afflicted? Rabbi Hiyya said to him: I welcome neither this suffering nor its reward, as one who welcomes this suffering with love is rewarded. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: Give me your hand. Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba gave him his hand, and Rabbi Yoḥanan stood him up and restored him to health.

Similarly, Rabbi Yoḥanan fell ill. Rabbi Ḥanina entered to visit him, and said to him: Is your suffering dear to you? Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: I welcome neither this suffering nor its reward. Rabbi Ḥanina said to him: Give me your hand. He gave him his hand, and Rabbi Ḥanina stood him up and restored him to health.

The Gemara asks: Why did Rabbi Yoḥanan wait for Rabbi Ḥanina to restore him to health? If he was able to heal his student, let Rabbi Yoḥanan stand himself up. The Gemara answers, they say: A prisoner cannot generally free himself from prison, but depends on others to release him from his shackles.' (Tractate Berachot 5b)

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 08 – Year B

This is the model society that God would have His people reveal to the world, where the people of the community take responsibility to care for each other and not to abrogate care and concern into the hands of a few or centralized governmental programs. Moses noted that God would be generous to give Israel the land. He would provide the people of Israel with many blessings and, as a response, Moses urged the people to be open-handed and kind hearted. Verse 10 even notes that giving generously will invite further blessing from the Lord. Would this solve poverty? No, not really! Deuteronomy 15:11 is even quoted by Jesus in Mark 14:7, “For you always have the poor with you.”²⁸ That there will be famines and wars, slaves and poor, the needy and lost until the world to come should not discourage people from giving. Instead it should spur people to further and greater acts of generosity and love.

Psalm 112.²⁹ The first half of the poem (Psalm 111) primarily proclaims and celebrates the mighty deeds of the Lord.³⁰ The actions of God give us insight into His character.³¹ We know more about God through what He has done and studying them. The works of God include His calling of a people through the covenants and his protection of and provision for that people. The final verse of Psalm 111 states, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”. This is

²⁸ Although, if Israel strictly obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, being careful to do all His commandments, then at least every seventh year, “There will be no poor among you...” (Deuteronomy 15:1-5). Today, there are still people who have no food when over 30% of the world is declared to be Christian. If every Christian was even slightly generous, the good that would be done would change the world.

Unfortunately, Christians often give to programs that will serve the poor people of ... whatever country is far away. God is clear that His people are to serve those in their own towns—the people who you have to actually meet. Often these people will be incredibly difficult to love and have patience with—they will take your time, your effort, and make your life more difficult. And yet, we have the example of Jesus, and even of Paul in Corinth, giving where hearts are closed. It can be easy to send a few dollars far away with the assurance that someone will eat (assuming the organization or government you are working with are doing what they say they are doing), it is much harder to actually do the work ourselves.

²⁹ The author of Psalm 112 is unknown, however, they have beautifully crafted a double abecedary acrostic poem. Apart from the opening imperative to ‘Praise the Lord’ (*Hallelujah*), every sentence begins with the next successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet using all 22 Hebrew characters for the 22 line psalm. Psalm 112 can hardly be read without including its counterpart, Psalm 111.

³⁰ Many Psalms tell of the deeds of the LORD. Psalm 111 is actually somewhat unique in not providing specific acts of God. Perhaps Psalm 111 allows the worshipper to remember the great works of God in their own life, even as they remember what He has done in history and for their fellow congregants with whom they stand.

³¹ God is and will always be God, He does not change. And yet, we somehow continuously change who He is in our minds. Other times we are told that the creator God (or merciful God, or God of judgment, or some other attribute) is such in every religion and therefore what difference does it make if we follow Allah or the God of Jacob. If we want to know who God is, we must examine what He has declared—His testimony—and His deeds.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 08 – Year B

echoed in Proverbs 9:10 and Job 28:28 and more immediately in Psalm 112:1 as the Psalmist turns to how we fear God, “Blessed is the man who fears the LORD.:

Fear, not in the sense of being scared—such a fear is inadequate—but in the sense of awesome respect for the power and authority of God. This fear leads to walking in the footsteps of God.³² The fear here is not one of misery or reluctant obligation but rather one of joyful obedience. The happy, or blessed, person is one who delights greatly in the commandments of God.

Even as Psalm 111 is about the generous deeds of the Lord, Psalm 112 has much to say about the generosity of the person who fears the Lord.³³ Psalm 112:3 notes that blessing can be in the form of riches and wealth. Prosperity can, indeed, be a blessing from God that extends from a life that honours the Lord. Honouring the Lord, however, includes the characteristic of generosity. Verse 5 says that the righteous are those who deal generously, verse 9 says they distribute freely which returns honour to both themselves and to God. Psalm 112:9 is quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:9 to encourage the believers to be generous. To fear the Lord also means to reflect His character through willful, delightful, and joyful obedience. One of those characteristics is godly generosity.

³² Tertullian, in *Prescription against Heretics* 43, states that, if there is no fear of God (or reason to fear God) all things are permitted. But the only time there is no fear of God is in the place God does not exist and where God does not exist, there is no truth. However, where God does exist...

“... there exists ‘the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom.’ Where the fear of God is, there is seriousness, an honourable and yet thoughtful diligence, as well as an anxious carefulness and a well-considered admission (to the sacred ministry) and a safely-guarded communion, and promotion after good service, and a scrupulous submission (to authority), and a devout attendance, and a modest gait, and a united church, and God in all things.”

³³ Once again, this pairs incredibly well with Deuteronomy 15 and II Corinthians 8.