

Scripture for the 12th Sunday after Pentecost, August 23, 2020

Introduction to the Epistle Lesson: Romans 12:1-8

In a way, both scripture lessons today ask the declaration Paul makes to the church at Rome: “The New Life in Christ.” In the previous verses in chapter 11, asks the question: “For who has known the mind of the Lord? In other words, Paul asks the same question Jesus asks the disciples in the gospel lesson from Matthew: “Who do you say that I am?” Listen to how Paul answers his own question in a reading from Romans, chapter 12, verses 1-8:

Reading from Romans 12:1-8 The New Life in Christ

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters,^[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual^[b] worship. **2** Do not be conformed to this world,^[c] but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.^[d]

3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. **4** For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, **5** so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. **6** We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; **7** ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; **8** the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Introduction to the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 16:13-20

The Message

We continue reading from the gospel of Matthew, but today we turn to chapter 16, verses 13-20. In this chapter, Jesus begins to explain to the disciples what is going to happen to him. In the text, just after our text this morning, Jesus “foretells his death and resurrection” for the first of three different times. As a prelude to that declaration, Jesus asks the disciples a profound question: “...who do you say that I am?” Peter, of course, is the first to answer. Listen to a reading from Matthew’s gospel:

A Reading from Matthew 16:13-20 Peter's Declaration about Jesus

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah,^[a] the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter,^[b] and on this rock^[c] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was^[d] the Messiah.