

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

It was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain.
When you make his life an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days;
through him the will of the Lord shall prosper.
Out of his anguish he shall see light;
he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.
The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

Since we have a great high priest
who has passed through the heavens,

Jesus, the Son of God,
let us hold fast to our confession.

For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are,
yet without sin.

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness,
so that we may receive mercy
and find grace to help in time of need.



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – 29 B

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee,
came forward to Jesus and said to him,
“Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”
And Jesus said to them,
“What is it you want me to do for you?”
And they said to him,
“Grant us to sit, one at your right hand
and one at your left, in your glory.”
But Jesus said to them,
“You do not know what you are asking.
Are you able to drink the cup that I drink,
or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”
They replied, “We are able.”
Then Jesus said to them,
“The cup that I drink you will drink;
and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized;
but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant,
but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”
When the ten heard this,
they began to be angry with James and John.
So Jesus called them and said to them,
“You know that among the Gentiles
those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them,
and their great ones are tyrants over them.
But it is not so among you;
but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,
and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.
For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,
and to give his life a ransom for many.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Isaiah 53:10-11

We commented on the fourth servant song before, especially in the readings of Holy Week. This extract was chosen because it contains the key word “many”: “by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous.”

In later Judaism, rabbinic comment interpreted “many” here to mean, not some, but all—that is, the nations of the world—thus ascribing universal significance to the servant’s work (in rabbinic interpretation, the servant was not the Messiah but Israel).

In the Christian application of this prophecy to Christ, the universality of his redeeming work is expressed by the use of “many” from the servant song, as in the Gospel reading for today (Mark 10:45).

Responsorial Psalm: 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

Psalm 33 is a hymn of praise suitable for any occasion. The choice of verses for today does not appear to be motivated by anything in the readings, unless we are meant to have in mind the servant who waits for God’s vindication of him and his unmerited sufferings (First Reading).

Reading II: Hebrews 4:14-16

These verses take up the theme of Christ’s full humanity, which was touched upon in the second reading two weeks ago. They affirm that Christ is fully qualified to be high priest because he shares our humanity, enabling him to sympathize with us in our weakness.

He knows what we are from his own personal experience. More than that, he has been tempted “in every respect” as we are, “yet without sinning.”

Are we supposed to take “in every respect” literally? Several writers have seized upon this phrase and extended it to include sexual temptation.

Now it is quite obvious that the author of Hebrews did not arrive at this conviction by examining every phase of our Lord’s inner life. The evidence was not at his disposal anyway, for the Gospel tradition shows practically no interest in the psychological experience of Jesus.

The case is similar to the ensuing phrase, “yet without sinning,” a conviction shared by other New Testament writers and therefore part of the common early Christian tradition. No one ever examined every overt act that our Lord did and concluded that he was sinless.

The clue to the meaning of these statements is to be found in the temptation stories in the Gospels. Each of these temptations was concerned with the fulfillment of Jesus' role in salvation history—in post-Easter terms, with his messianic vocation.

The temptations were temptations to abandon that role and to follow a different line. Jesus' sinlessness, accordingly, means his total commitment to his Father's call to perform this unique function in salvation history.

Speculations as to whether Jesus underwent any temptations unrelated to his messianic vocation, though prompted by this rhetorical statement of Hebrews, is kerygmatically irrelevant for the New Testament.

If we ask, Was our Lord subject to sexual temptation?, we are asking a question that the New Testament is not concerned to ask.

That may be disappointing to our post-Freudian world, but perhaps that in itself is a judgment upon our contemporary obsessions.

Gospel: Mark 10:35-45 (long form); 10:42-45 (short form)

Two units of material comprise this passage—the Zebedees' question and the saying about true greatness. The shorter form contains only the second of these units.

Before Mark, the Zebedees' question was probably an independent piece of tradition whose preservation in the Church was due to a biographical interest in the fate of John.

Church tradition is ambiguous, part of it ascribing to John likewise an early martyrdom, the main stream identifying him with the author of the Johannine writings, who allegedly lived to a very old age.

Mark uses this traditional saying as an introduction to the saying on true greatness. It is part of Mark's use of the disciples throughout his Gospel as symbols of the dangers to which the Church in his own day was exposed.

These dangers were twofold: a fascination with the "divine-man" Christology and dismay at the prospect of persecution. These two concerns provide the background for Mark's use of the two elements of material at this point.

This story forms the climax of Mark's central section (Mark 8:22-10:45), in which he counters the twin heresies afflicting his Church with the proclamation of Jesus as the Son of man who is to be crucified (as opposed to Christ as the divine man or miracle-worker), and the Christian life as a challenge to take up one's cross and follow him.

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