

Exegetical Notes for October 2018

Our thanks to the Rev. Derwyn Costinak (Rector of Good Shepherd, Calgary)
for writing the Lectionary Notes this Month!

October 7, 2018 – Pentecost 19

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

- Connecting phrase in prologue: "...having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs." (1:4).
- Why do you think the writer makes the point that God did not subject the coming world to angels (2:5)? How would this begin to encourage the reader to think about things? How would it serve as a corrective to what might have been commonly-held belief about angels?
- In quoting Psalm 8, the writer compares humans to angels, but with humans ending up "on top." How does this observation affect what he says about Jesus in v 9? How does this observation affect how we should think about Jesus?
- Vv 11-12 give us the practical upshot of what has been accomplished in Jesus: "For this reason..." How does what follows encourage readers to think of themselves in relation to Christ? What are the implications of this understanding? How does this connection with Jesus affect our approach to God?

October 14, 2018 – Pentecost 20

Hebrews (1:1-4), 4:12-16

- Connecting phrase in prologue: "...he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (1:3c).
- Sitting at the right hand of a monarch was understood to be a place of honour and gave to the one seated there the status of the monarch. What does this say about Jesus as he occupies that position beside God?
- An important part of the ministry of Jesus Christ is that he made the invisible God visible in his words and actions in the flesh. How does this help us understand the character and intention of God? How does this modify assumptions made about God as described in the OT?
- The tragedy of the OT narrative is that Israel failed to live up to the stipulations of the covenant God gave them in the Torah. Do we have any reason to think that we might do any better? How does Jesus's role as high priest encourage us with this in mind (4:14-15)?
- Since Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, the wonderful invitation of 4:16 can be given to us. How does this knowledge affect our concept of approaching God with our concerns, requests, and petitions? If we could literally and physically approach the divine throne as this image suggests, what would we do? what would we say? how would we make our requests?
- Keeping this image firmly in mind, how might this affect the way we offer the Prayers of the People in our liturgy every Sunday?

October 21, 2018 – Pentecost 21

Hebrews (1:1-4), 5:1-10

- Connecting phrase in prologue: “When he had made purification for sins...” (1:3b).
- Hebrews 5:1-4 explains the role of the high priest as an empathic one, with the awareness that he shares in the weaknesses and foibles of being human, thus being a participant with the people in their humanity. Vv 5-6 indicate that Jesus has been appointed to this role in a similar way. How does this observation inform you about what Jesus does as our high priest? Does the idea of Jesus being empathic towards us as high priest fit how you see him? Does it fit how your congregation sees him? Does it fit how people who are not churchgoers see him?
- Vv 8-9 describe Jesus as having a learning experience in being human. That experience is what resulted in him “having been made perfect” (v 9a). Taking the orthodox view of the Incarnation with Jesus being God in the flesh, how can we think of him being made perfect? What is there for him to learn? Does it have to do with having a first-hand human experience? Is it related to experiencing the limitations of being incarnate, of being in the flesh?
- If this being made perfect is part of how “he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,” (v 9b), what does this say about how God views salvation? Is salvation necessary because God is a threat to us? Is salvation necessary because God is angry at our weakness? Is salvation provided because God can now relate to our weakness? Is salvation God’s empathic response to our human experiences?
- How does what you conclude about this affect your understanding of what it means that Jesus “made purification for sins”? Is this a concept to be avoided or one to be better understood? Is it bad news or is it good news?

October 28, 2018 – Pentecost 22

Hebrews (1:1-4), 7:23-28

- Connecting phrase in prologue: “He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.” (1:3a).
- Hebrews 7 makes it clear that Jesus and his priestly work continues for ever, that his priestly offering of himself was done once for all and never needs to be repeated. Because of this permanent priesthood that continues for ever, we are told that “he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (7:25). How does the idea that Jesus makes intercession for us affect you? If you knew of someone who always had the ear of the monarch, how would that affect your understanding of the likelihood of your requests being heard by the monarch? How favourably would your requests be received, do you think?
- How do you envision Jesus sustaining all things by his powerful word? Is it because of commands he issues from the throne? Is it because his word includes promises of grace to be found? Is it because he simply said he would do so? Perhaps this is the connection with the “word of the oath” in 7:28.
- Why is it fitting that we should have such a high priest (7:26)? How does the list of qualities that follows (holy, blameless, undefiled, separated, exalted) help us understand the nature of Jesus our high priest? If it is fitting that he be our high priest as described in this way, how does this affect our understanding of who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, and what Jesus will yet do?