

FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD 1.31.2021

Let's look at the Bible readings for the 4th Sunday after the Epiphany, Jan. 31, to prepare for on-line, drive-in, and in-person worship (10 am) with Abounding Joy.

1ST READING: Deuteronomy 18:15-22

Moses said, ¹⁵“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers — it is to him you shall listen — ¹⁶just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’

¹⁷And the Lord said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹And whoever

Listen to the prophet like Moses

will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. ²⁰But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. ²¹And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?’ — ²²when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.’”

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO DEUTERONOMY, CHAPTER 18

1. Who does Moses refer to as the “prophet like me”? (See Acts 3:22.)
2. Compare vs. 19 with Matthew 7:24-27. What connection do you make?
3. Prophecy can be both “forth-telling” (declaring God’s Word now) and “fore-telling” (predicting what will happen in the future). What are the two prohibitions regarding prophecy that are stated in verse 20?
4. What test of the validity of a prophet is mentioned in verse 22?

2ND READING: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

¹Concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. ²If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. ³But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

⁴Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but

Don't let your freedom harm another

one.” ⁵For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth — as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords” — ⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with

idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being **weak**, is defiled. ⁸Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.

⁹**But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the **weak**.** ¹⁰For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged,

if his conscience is **weak**, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹And so by your knowledge this **weak** person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. ¹²Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is **weak**, you sin against Christ. ¹³**Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.**

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO I CORINTHIANS, CHAPTER 8:

1. Someone has said, "I don't care what you know, until I know that you care." How does that relate to what Paul says in verses 1-3?
2. In the first century Mediterranean world, people sacrificed animals to various gods and then offered the meat for sale in public markets. For Paul, and other "strong" Christians, this was a trivial matter. They knew there were no other gods and that the sacrifices were meaningless. However, there were new "weak" Christians who did not understand this. In vss. 13 and 9 what does Paul decide to do and why?
3. Might these be modern day examples of this principle: not drinking in front of a newly sober alcoholic; and, though you might not think it necessary, wearing a mask around one who is deathly (even irrationally) afraid of catching COVID-19?

THE GOSPEL: Mark 1:21-28

²¹Jesus, Simon, Andrew, James and John went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²²And they were **astonished** at his teaching, for he taught them as **one who had authority**, and not as the scribes.

²³And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are

— the Holy One of God." ²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷And they were all **amazed**, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? **A new teaching with authority!** He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO MARK, CHAPTER 1:

1. What was the people's reaction to the teaching and actions of Jesus?
2. What is authority? How did the authority of Jesus (as the Son of God) come through in this text?
3. In Mark's Gospel, often the demons recognize Jesus' identity before the "good guys" do. In this passage, who is Jesus revealed to be? What does He say to, and do for, you that only the Son of God can say and do?