

**First Reading: Isaiah 51:1-6**

<sup>1</sup>“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. <sup>2</sup>Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him. <sup>3</sup>For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. <sup>4</sup>Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for

a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. <sup>5</sup>My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. <sup>6</sup>Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.”

Isaiah is sometimes the most beloved prophet of the Jewish people. To a wayward people, he spoke many words of warning. When they were a judged and broken people, he shared many words of hope. The word servant sometimes refers to the nation of Israel being God's servant and sometimes it is the coming messiah, God's servant.

1. Here again we hear the word "listen" in other words, give me your full attention, worship, and obedience. Those who are seeking to be righteous for the sake of restoring Israel are to look where?
2. What is the rock from which they were hewn? Is it a people? Is it a promise? Is it God himself?
3. In verse four, what is God telling the people? God is not a bunch of truths, values, and promises, how are we to relate to such a God?
4. What is God promising the people?

**Second Reading: Romans 11:33-12:8**

<sup>33</sup>Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! <sup>34</sup>“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” <sup>35</sup>“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” <sup>36</sup>For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup>I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not be

conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. <sup>3</sup>For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

<sup>6</sup>Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup>if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;

<sup>8</sup>the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Here we come to the joy of Romans. Paul has laid out the priority of "faith in God" over our capacity to fulfill the law or earn our way to salvation. To be "in Christ" is a whole new Spirit and a whole new motivation in life! God has made it possible to be fully right with him through Christ. The gospel is not a way of getting around the law or a just God, but it is a just God who bore our sins by his own blood and flesh, and his own spirit. Such pure wisdom, holiness, truth, and compassion puts us to death and raises a new life within us!

1. Having stated his case for the gospel what is therefore Paul's appeal to us?
2. How are we to think about ourselves? What does this mean? How do people tend to think about themselves?
3. How do we understand the importance of the body of Christians being of one mind, being the body of Christ? What does it mean to have different functions but one body?

### **Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20**

<sup>13</sup>When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup>And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup>He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you,

but my Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup>I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup>Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

At this point in the ministry of Jesus, the disciples are totally committed to Jesus as the Messiah and they are wondering how Jesus' mission will fit into the world. Jesus will build His church and the "gates of hell" cannot stand against it.

1. What is significant about the district or region of Caesarea Philippi?
2. We have a case of inside talk and outside talk. Those in the know, and then common talk and opinion. Jesus has made himself known as the Messiah not by His words but by His actions in Matthew. How do people perceive Jesus as a mighty prophet or the Messiah? How do people perceive Jesus today, even if they are Christian? Do people see him as prophet or Messiah?
3. What does it mean to bind or loose things?
4. Why does He tell the disciples to hide His true identity?