

17th Sunday after Pentecost September 16, 2018

16th Sunday after the Trinity Proper 19 (24)

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

LUTHERAN

LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

Available on line at:

- ✦ www.bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies
- ✦ Through www.Facebook.com at “Living the Lutheran Lectionary”, “Bethlehem Lutheran Church Parma”, or “Harold Weseloh”
- ✦ All links in this on-line copy are active and can be reached using Ctrl+Click

Gather and be blessed:

- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM:** Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134
- ✦ **Fridays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at puritaspastor@hotmail.com
- ✦ **First Sunday of the month at 11 AM:** St. Philip Lutheran Church, 11315 Regalia Ave., Cleveland, OH 44104



Carolinas mission district

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 849 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not Listed

“Praise the One who breaks the darkness”

This hymn is only published in 13 hymnals, four of which are Lutheran. The Hymnal Supplement 98 appears to be the first modern usage for Lutherans. Listen to Robert Morehead give an introduction to the hymn before he plays: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ycnwIA-aPI>

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVXblSMGaUg> “Hymns for all Saints Psalms, Hymns, Spiritual Songs” Concordia Publishing House
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VwjcpXJVb8> A Biblical introduction to the theme of “breaking the darkness”. Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness (song by James Laster) performed by Koiné in Footsteps to the Cross. <http://koinemusic.com/footsteps-dvd>

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

Isaiah 50:4-10; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Isaiah 50:4-9a or Proverbs 1:20-33 (Next week: Jeremiah 11:18-20; RCL, Wisdom of Solomon 1:16 - 2:1, 12-22)

“Isaiah 50:4-9a’s (RCL) juxtaposition of beauty and brutality is so jarring that it may be disconcerting. Yet that combination is part of what helps make our text in so many ways reminiscent of daily life. After all, it sometimes feels as if we’re almost constantly moving from beauty to brutality (and then, so often, right back to beauty – and back yet again).

The prophet probably penned the words of the text the Lectionary appoints for this Sunday to an Israel whose sins have dragged her far from the beautiful home God had promised her ancient ancestors and granted her parents and grandparents. But the second half of Isaiah’s prophecy anticipates a time when God will bring Israel home...” (continued after the reading)

Israel's Sin and the Servant's Obedience

50 Thus says the LORD:

“Where is your mother's certificate of divorce,
with which I sent her away?

Or which of my creditors is it
to whom I have sold you?

Behold, for your iniquities you were sold,
and for your transgressions your mother was sent away.

² Why, when I came, was there no man;
why, when I called, was there no one to answer?

Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem?
Or have I no power to deliver?

Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make the rivers a desert;
their fish stink for lack of water
and die of thirst.

³ I clothe the heavens with blackness
and make sackcloth their covering.”

⁴ The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain with a word
him who is weary.

Morning by morning he awakens;
he awakens my ear
to hear as those who are taught.

⁵ The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious;
I turned not backward.

⁶ I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting.

⁷ But the Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like a flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

⁸ He who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together.

Who is my adversary?

Let him come near to me.

⁹ Behold, the Lord GOD helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment;
the moth will eat them up.

¹⁰ Who among you fears the LORD
and obeys the voice of his servant?

Let him who walks in darkness
and has no light

trust in the name of the LORD
and rely on his God.

¹¹ *Behold, all you who kindle a fire,
who equip yourselves with burning torches!
Walk by the light of your fire,
and by the torches that you have kindled!*

*This you have from my hand:
you shall lie down in torment.**

That brightening future, however, puts Israel's fortunes in stark contrast to those of our Old Testament lesson's narrator. After all, while Isaiah 50 suggests Israel's fortunes are on the rise, its narrator's seem moving in the exact opposite direction.

His persecution is both sad and perhaps a bit surprising. The narrator seems to be, after all, as our colleague Scott Hoezee notes, the kind of person most of us would want for a friend. He seems to know just when to talk and when to listen...

Yet even in the face of almost fanatical persecution, Isaiah 50's narrator insists he has not rebelled against God's call to speak God's truth. The narrator insists that he has "not drawn back" (5). It's certainly possible, if not likely that his courage stems at least in part from the strong sense of God's calling that verses 4-5a recount.

There the narrator recognizes that God has given him not just his mission, but also his ability to carry it out well. God has given him the tongue of a teacher. However, God has also given him the ear of someone who's willing to be taught so that he can be an effective communicator. Morning by morning God awakens our text's narrator to listen to God like a student...

So Isaiah 50's wise preachers and teachers will want to at least consider reminding anyone who claims to speak for God, whether formally or informally, to listen to God before speaking for God. We'll urge each other to pray for open ears before we pray for nimble tongues. We'll challenge each other to be diligent students of God's Word and ways before we're speakers of God's Word.

However, as Isaiah 50:4-9a reminds us, even good student/teachers may suffer for listening to before speaking for God. "The sovereign Lord has opened" the narrator's ears (5). So what's his "reward"? Brutal persecution. Yet the narrator insists it hasn't deterred him. He, instead, allows his assailants to both physically and emotionally hurt him deeply. However, our text's narrator doesn't let those assaults push him away from his prophetic calling. He doesn't flinch when people do their worst to him. Because he's confident God will ultimately vindicate him, the narrator continues to listen for God's Word. Because he trusts the Lord to help him, he continues to resolutely speak God's truths...

But, as Olson adds, Isaiah 50 can also be a model for the whole Body of Christ that is the Church. God's adopted sons and daughters, after all, naturally respond to physical and physical attacks by lashing out at our assailants. Or we withdraw from those who attack us without speaking a prophetic word to their violence.

Isaiah 50's narrator provides the kind of Christ-like response to others' attacks that God equips us to offer. After all, its narrator harms neither his attacker nor himself in response to the violence inflicted on him. He remains within the sometimes brutal community to both hear and speak God's Word because he is confident that while people may condemn him, God will graciously help him.

There are no guarantees people won't persecute those who proclaim and hear Isaiah 50 for listening to and speaking for the Lord. There are no guarantees God's adopted sons and daughters will be popular, healthy and wealthy.

God's only guarantees are that God will never abandon those whom God loves for Jesus' sake. The only guarantees are that nothing in all of creation can separate God's people from God's love for us in Jesus Christ. The only guarantees are that when we pass through various deep waters or hot fires, God graciously goes and stays with us, by God's Word and Spirit.

**Yet it's regrettable that the Lectionary, in its apparent obsession with omitting anything that's even remotely uncomfortable, omits the second part of verse 9 from the text it appoints for this Sunday. After all, there the narrator insists those who unjustly persecute him "will all wear out like a garment."*

That doesn't just serve to remind those who suffer unjustly that God takes our misery very seriously. It also warns those who fail to act like Jesus that they'll eventually, like an aging boxer, wear themselves out by causing other people so much grief.

- http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/lent-6b/?type=old_testament_lectionary Scott Hoezee

Psalm 116:1-9; RCL, Psalm 116:1-9 or Wisdom of Solomon 7:26- 8:1, or Psalm 19 (Psalm 54; RCL, Psalm 54 or Psalm 1)

"The psalm is a part of the collection of psalms running from 113 to 118, called the "Egyptian Hallel" (Egyptian praise), centering on the story of the deliverance from Egypt. Psalm 113 is a hymn. Psalm 114 is the centerpiece of this collection, reporting the event of the exodus. As the central act of God's saving activity, the exodus is to the Old Testament what the cross-resurrection is to the New Testament. Psalm 115 then celebrates this event with a call to praise. Psalm 114 thus tells the story of the nation's deliverance from bondage and is followed by words of praise (Psalm 115:1, 18). Psalm 116 now tells the story of an individual's deliverance from death, and again is followed by words of praise, in Psalm 117.

Psalm 116 also plays a part in the yearly biblical readings of Christian churches, appearing in the ABC lectionary readings and also a text for Maundy Thursday. Luke 22:14-23 and the parallels tell of Jesus celebrating a meal with his disciples at Passover time. Psalm 116 would have been sung as part of their Passover celebration.

I suggest taking Psalm 116 as a whole as the basis for the sermon, putting it in the contexts of the celebration of the deliverance from Egypt and also the celebration of deliverance from sin and death as achieved by the Messiah suffering on the cross (Luke 24:26). The language of 24:30 points to the language of the institution of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19). The psalm itself tells the story of the deliverance of an individual from sickness, and of the life of a people as a praying and praising people..."

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=877 James Limburg

Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.



I Love the LORD

- 116 I love the LORD, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.
- ² Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
- ³ The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
- ⁴ Then I called on the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!”
- ⁵ Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
our God is merciful.
- ⁶ The LORD preserves the simple;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
- ⁷ Return, O my soul, to your rest;
for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
- ⁸ For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling;
- ⁹ I will walk before the LORD
in the land of the living.
- ¹⁰ I believed, even when^[a] I spoke:
“I am greatly afflicted”;
- ¹¹ I said in my alarm,
“All mankind are liars.”
- ¹² What shall I render to the LORD
for all his benefits to me?
- ¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD,
- ¹⁴ I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.
- ¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his saints.
- ¹⁶ O LORD, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the son of your maidservant.
You have loosed my bonds.
- ¹⁷ I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the LORD.
- ¹⁸ I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people,

¹⁹ in the courts of the house of the LORD,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!

a. [Psalm 116:10](#) Or *believed, indeed*; Septuagint *believed, therefore*

“A single voice speaks here, drawing me into the psalmist's experience and, in effect, leading me to compare my own with his.

The voice here:

- is upbeat and hopeful, not remorsefully agonizing over sin
- tells a personal story of rescue in answer to his prayer
- tells the story publicly to other worshipers (and God [verses 16-17]), perhaps at the temple (see verses 18-19)
- moves from a declaration of love for God (verses 1-2), through a moving report about the rescue experience (verses 3-11), to a series of thankful promises (verses 12-15, 18-19)

In short, the psalm has two topics: *why* the Psalmist loves God, and *how* he plans to show gratitude...”

➤ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=303 [Robert L. Hubbard, Jr.](#) Professor of Biblical Literature, North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL

James 3:1-12; RCL, the same reading (James 3:13-4:10; RCL, James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a)

The readings from James will continue through September 30.

“Metaphors abound in James 3:1-12, and these can often obscure the point that James is trying to make in this passage, a point not about speech in general or even about teaching, despite the way he begins this chapter.

Rather, in James 3 the focus is on how faithful Christians speak about other human beings made in God's own image (James 3:9), calling us to account for abusive language. However, to get to this argument, James begins with a meditation on human speech and on the potentially destructive power of the human tongue...

In 3:7-12, James reaches the climax of this part of his letter. Why does James consider the tongue a “restless evil full of deadly poison” (3:8)? Consider, says James, how we the church speak. We bless God and with the same tongues we curse one another (3:9)...”

➤ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3776 [Margaret Aymer](#) The First Presbyterian Church, Shreveport, D. Thomason Professor of New Testament, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, Texas

Taming the Tongue

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ² For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle

his whole body. ³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴ Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life,^[a] and set on fire by hell.^[b] ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers,^[c] these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

- a. [James 3:6](#) Or *wheel of birth*
- b. [James 3:6](#) Greek *Gehenna*
- c. [James 3:10](#) Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse [12](#)

“...To what does James compare the tongue, in our Epistle reading for today? St. James makes several comparisons in this passage, and they are instructive for our self-awareness as to how we use our tongue.

He starts out by talking about those who would become pastors: “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” In other words, those who teach in the church have a special—and heavy—responsibility. They must know the right doctrine and teach it correctly. A pastor should be careful about what he says, for how he speaks will influence people—hopefully in the right direction in their faith and life, and not in the wrong.

Then James goes on from there to expand his scope from pastors to all Christians and to the things that we say: “For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.” We all stumble. None of us is perfect...If you can control your tongue, that hardest of all things to control, you will likely have success in controlling the rest of your body, too.

Can you bridle your tongue? If you can do that, you should be able to bridle your whole body. And this leads James to make his **first comparison** about the tongue. He compares it to the bit and bridle we use to control a horse: “If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.” ...

The small but powerful tongue is like that bit and bridle. How you use your tongue can steer the whole direction of your life....

James goes on with **another comparison**: “Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.” A giant sailing ship. Controlled by a relatively small rudder. By the right control of the

rudder, the captain can avoid the dangerous shoals and the rocks and the reefs. If he doesn't—if he's not alert, if he turns the rudder just a slight bit in the wrong direction—he can hit an iceberg and go down like the Titanic...

James continues. Another comparison: “How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.” A small match, an untended campfire, a few smoldering embers—combine that with a tinderbox of dry wood, and the next thing you know, you've got a big blaze, out of control...

Yes, we need God's help to control our tongues. To what shall we compare the tongue? Compare it to the tongue of Christ. In the Old Testament Reading today from Isaiah, the prophet is speaking of the Servant of the Lord, which we know is a prophecy about Christ. And this Servant says: “The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught.” How Jesus Christ used his tongue was always wise, never out of place...

On the other hand, Jesus used his tongue to comfort troubled sinners and to bring them a word of peace and forgiveness and refreshment. Again, from the Isaiah prophecy: “The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.” This is just what Jesus did with his tongue. Listen to his words: “Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

➤ <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2012/09/the-small-but-powerful-tongue-sermon-on-james-31-12-by-pr-charles-henrickson/> Rev. Charles Henrickson currently serves at [St Matthew Lutheran Church in Bonne Terre, Missouri](#).

Mark 9:14-29; RCL, Mark 8:27-38 (Mark 9:30-37; RCL, the same reading)

“In today's Gospel, Jesus said, “All things are possible for one who believes.” Many people take a verse like this out of context. They actually believe that Jesus was telling us to believe in ourselves and all our dreams will come true. They point to other verses such as the time Jesus said, [[Matthew 17:20](#)] “If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.” Then they say, “All you need is enough faith in yourself and then you will be successful, happy, wealthy, healthy, and so forth.”

Today's gospel very ably demonstrates the fallacy of this kind of thinking. There are actually two different examples of misplaced faith in today's Gospel. There were the disciples who should have known better and there was the father with his demon-possessed son...”
(continued after the reading)

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 9th Chapter”

Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit

¹⁴ And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵ And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. ¹⁶ And he asked them, **“What are you arguing about with them?”** ¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes

him mute. ¹⁸ And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” ¹⁹ And he answered them, **“O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.”** ²⁰ And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ And Jesus asked his father, **“How long has this been happening to him?”** And he said, “From childhood. ²² And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” ²³ And Jesus said to him, **“If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.”** ²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out^[a] and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” ²⁵ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, **“You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”** ²⁶ And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ²⁸ And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁹ And he said to them, **“This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”**^[b]

- a. [Mark 9:24](#) Some manuscripts add *with tears*
- b. [Mark 9:29](#) Some manuscripts add *and fasting*

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“...Jesus had taken Peter, James, and John up on the mountain to witness His transfiguration. In the mean time, the remaining nine disciples were left behind with no adult supervision. While the nine disciples were waiting for Jesus and the others to return, a father approached them with a demon possessed son and asked for Jesus. The disciples most likely told the father that Jesus would be back later in the day and that they could take a look while they were waiting.

Now, in the disciples' defense, they had exorcised demons before. In Luke 10 we read that Jesus sent seventy-two disciples out to do mission work. Verse 17 of Luke 10 informs us that the seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" So they did have experience with demons.

Never the less, this demon wasn't leaving and, apparently, their attempts to make it leave had attracted a crowd that included some scribes. So now we have this situation that the beginning of today's gospel describes. Jesus returned from the mountain top with Peter, James, and John only to find the remaining nine disciples surrounded by a large crowd of people and arguing with the scribes.

Jesus took a little bit of time to sort out the situation and then He scolded the Disciples, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?"

The disciples had fallen into a trap that is as old as the nation of Israel itself. How often do we read in the Old Testament that God blessed the Israelites and that the Israelites then began to believe that they were responsible for their own success?

These nine disciples had a similar problem. The Holy Spirit had worked through them to expel many demons. They had grown complacent and begun to rely on themselves. They had become careless. The object of their faith had switched from God back to themselves. They had come to the point that Jesus had to call them a faithless generation.

The father shows a different kind of misplaced faith. He had placed his faith in many earthly cures and been disappointed. When he asked for help, the disappointments of the past came through. He said, "But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." The world had disappointed him so many times that his request had no confidence. He expected disappointment once again.

The evil threesome of the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature constantly try to make us like those nine disciples or like that father. They will tell us that we don't need to read God's Word every day. They will tell us that we no longer need Sunday School now that we have been confirmed. Our tired bodies tell us that it is way too hard to get to church before 9:15 so that we can study God's Word with our brothers and sisters in the family of Christ. The forces of evil will do everything they can to separate us from God's Word. They want us to become complacent and begin to rely on ourselves instead of God. They seek to replace our faith in God with faith in ourselves or some other false spirituality.

The cure for that complacency - that false spirituality lies in Jesus Christ. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross takes away our sin and declares us holy in God's eyes. Just as He restored new life to the demon-possessed son in today's Gospel, He also restores new life to us. Just as He drove the demon out of this young man, he drives sin out of us.

The comfort of this Gospel is that in spite of the fact that Jesus called the disciples faithless - in spite of the fact that the father's faith was weak and said, "If you can," Jesus still threw the demon out of the boy. At the sound of God's Word, the demon had to leave. The power of this healing depended on God, our savior, Jesus Christ, and not on the faith of those who observed the miracle..."

- <http://lcmssermons.com/index.php?sn=459> James T. Batchelor Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Hoopeston, IL



Agnus Day appears with the permission of <http://www.agnusday.org/>

So who uses Living the Lutheran Lectionary and how?

In addition to the Thursday morning class at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Parma, Ohio, where it is also posted at www.bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com, it is also the center of teaching and worship at Puritas Lutheran Church and St Philip Lutheran Church, both in Cleveland, Ohio. The first is a small house church and the second is a congregation about to celebrate 90 years of ministry. So where else does it proclaim the Gospel?

Pastors, students, vicar, youth workers, evangelists and other Christians in Africa! Through Facebook at either “Harold Weseloh” or “Living the Lutheran Lectionary” is a weekly posting inviting others to read the lesson for the coming Sunday. There is also a group called “Lutheran Lectionary” attached to Messenger for Harold Weseloh. Here are a few examples:

Akuwa James , Orishaba Obed  and Black-Blood Duncan  from Uganda,

and Nick Seda , Okach Omot Opiew  and Okwaye Gwoy Ochong  from Kenya.

Pastor Akuwa James uses them for sermon preparation, Vicar Orishaba Obed finds encouragement, Black-Blood Duncan applies them to his work as a national youth worker. Pastor Nick Seda shares them with other pastors in an online discussion group and has started to use portions of the lesson for his morning Sunday School lesson – only 426 in the class. Okach Omot Opiew works in refugee camps, planting churches as he continues his studies and Okwaye Gwoy Ochong has tied them to his studies at Lutheran School of Theology in Nairobi, Kenya.

There are additional contacts in Kenya, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Tanzania and a new one in the Philippines. There are also followers like Jackie Mize-Baker, a retired Lutheran Immigration worker in New York City, Pastor Richard Kidd in Boardman, Ohio and several local people who at least “like” it on Facebook on a regular basis. A weekly short video “teaser” has been added to encourage additional interest.

It makes an excellent witnessing tool. I always have a copy with me and when it comes up in conversation I pass it on with encouragement to join on Thursday mornings. Share ways you have used the lessons.

Personal note: Pastor Seda became a new father about a week ago. His son was baptized at a synod gathering as Harold Weseloh Seda. Guess the lessons and conversations make an impression.