

Collect / Prayer of the Day (ELW)

O Lord God, you teach us that without love, our actions gain nothing. Pour into our hearts your most excellent gift of love, that, made alive by your Spirit, we may know goodness and peace, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Collect / Prayer of the Day (LBW)

O God, form the minds of your faithful people into a single will. Make us love what you command and desire what you promise, that, amid all the changes of this world, our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Suggested Sermon Titles (Use at your own risk.)

	Acts	Rev	Jn
How I Learned to Stop Worrying about Kosher and Love the Gentiles	X		
You Can't Call It Dirty If God Made It Clean.	X		
Believe It or Not, God Has Given Others Life Too.	X		
A New Heaven and a New Earth – But without the Sea		X	
The Beginning and the End Makes All Things New.		X	
A Gift from the Spring of the Water of Life		X	
Words That are Trustworthy and True		X	
They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love			X
God Glorifies Jesus. Jesus Glorifies God. Glory, Glory Everywhere!			X
We Cannot Go Where Jesus Went, but We Follow Nonetheless.			X

Notes on References:

- “p 121.2” means “page 121, paragraph 2”. “p 227.0” means “page 227, the paragraph continued from the previous page (p 226)”.
- “Smith, “John’s Apocalypse”, ¶8” means “Smith’s article titled “John’s Apocalypse”, paragraph number 8”.
- “Loader, “First Thoughts”” refers to Bill Loaders commentary articles on NT lessons at <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/lectionaryindex.html>. Each NT lesson is referred to by the RCL Sunday and the scripture reference. His “First Thoughts” on Acts 11.1-18 is attached as a particularly provocative example: <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/CActsEaster5.htm>.
- “ACNT” refers to *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament*.

Lesson I: Acts 11:1-18 (NRSV)

^{11.1}Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. ²So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, ³saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" ⁴Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, ⁵I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. ⁶As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. ⁷I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' ¹⁰This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. ¹¹At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. ¹²The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; ¹⁴he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' ¹⁵And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" ¹⁸When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

11.1-3 The issue "those from the circumcision" pose "is one of table fellowship. That the Gentiles have "received the word of God" – which is explicitly acknowledged in 11.1 – does not yet decide the question of their status vis-à-vis Jewish believers. Can Jewish Christians share meals with

them? Are these Gentiles members of God's people of equal status with those who first believed? . . . ¶Therefore, the question how meals could be holy yet shared with unclean people is not an easy one. Peter's opponents imply that by being willing to eat with Gentiles, he has also jeopardized the identity of the messianic community as the people of God" (Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: Acts*, p 200.0-1)

11.5-15 "Out of the longer narrative Luke has selected these elements for Peter's defense precisely because they show unequivocally that his decision was not the result of human calculation, but rather a *response to the divine initiative*, from beginning to end." (Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: Acts*, p 200.4)

11.12 "Who shall be admitted to the church's table is a thoroughly religious question. Peter now says that "the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction" (11.12). The church's silence and then response shows that it realizes a bold (and perhaps frightening) chapter has opened in the saga of the People of God. To Gentiles also has God granted the ability to turn toward life." (Willimon, *Interpretation: Acts*, p 99.2)

11.17 If God gives the Spirit, then the faith is valid. Compare our anointing at baptism words, "<name>, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever." (ELW *Pew Edition*, p 231)

11.18 "Peter is no longer fixated at the stage of table-fellowship. He has begun to think in terms of the gift of God for salvation." (Johnson, *Sacra Pagina*, p 201.1)

11.18 Repentance "is more than a decision we make ("since I gave my life to Christ"; "since I took Jesus as my personal Savior") or some good deed we offer to God; repentance is the joyful human response to God's offer of himself to us, the necessary, quite appropriate turn of a life which is the recipient of God's gracious turning toward us. Repentance is an act of God's grace." (Willimon, *Interpretation: Acts*, p 100.1)

Lesson II: Revelation 21:1-6 (NRSV)

^{21.1}Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
⁴he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."

⁵And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

21.1 Note that this is not a disembodied, "spiritual" existence, but our good old "heaven and earth" created anew. It is something new, but still a continuation in some sense of the old. (RMB)

21.1 "Certainly many peoples saw the sea as anything but a source of life and hope. It was the mythical source of danger, of monsters and dragons, the abyss. Revelation leaves no place for the sea where we might find spirituality impossible to imagine without its mystery." (Loader, "First Thoughts", ¶2)

21.2-3 Are the *bride* and *husband* of v2 to be equated with the *mortals* and *God* of v3? (RMB)

21.2 What is the *holy city*, the *new Jerusalem*? (RMB)

21.3 Is the *God* of v3 Father, Son, or Holy Spirit? ("Yes" is not an adequate answer. ☺)

21.3 "The word *skēnē* (*dwelling*) . . . is the word regularly used in the LXX for the Hebrew *mishkan* (tent), which was the symbol of God's abiding presence in the midst of Israel in the wilderness. John has thus chosen to use a term which implies that the promise of God's presence has already had constant fulfillments in the past wherever Israel has been true to her calling." (Caird, *Revelation of Saint John*, p 263.2)

21.3 "The new Jerusalem is not populated by the "chosen people" only; the peoples of the earth, the very nations and even their kings (21.24!) that had opposed God's rule and oppressed the church, are here pictured as redeemed citizens of the Holy City." (Boring, *Interpretation: Revelation*, p 221.2)

21.4 If *death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more*, then are our experiences of suffering in this life in some way devalued? In the end, does this life, *the first things*, not matter once it has passed away? Ie, if no regrets (no mourning) then it's all OK? (RMB)

21.5 "The advent of the heavenly city does not abolish all human efforts to build a decent earthly *civilization* but fulfills them. God does not make "all new things", but "all things new" (21.5). . . . Like apocalyptic thought in general, John affirms this world and its value and thus pictures eternal salvation as the salvation of the world and of history itself. Salvation does not, according to John, offer escape from the tragedy of historical existence." (Boring, *Interpretation: Revelation*, p 220.2)

21.5-6 Does *Write this, for . . .* refer to 21.5a or 21.6? (RMB)

21.6 *It is done*. Compare Jn 19.30: *It is finished*. (RMB)

21.6 "the word *eschaton* (neut) does not occur in the New Testament. John knows only of the *eschatos* (masc), a person who is both *the beginning and the end*. (Caird, *Revelation of Saint John*, p 266.1)

Gospel: John 13:31–35 (NRSV)

³¹When (Judas) had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

- 13.31-32 "Crucial to Jesus' self-gift in love is his being "lifted up" to make God known (cf 3.14; 8.28) and to draw everyone to himself (12.32-33). Thus Judas' departure (v30) leads *logically* to the proclamation of v31-32. These words do not introduce a discourse (13.31–14.31), but proclaim that the hour has come (cf 12.33, 27, 31; 13.1). Now is the time for the Son of Man to be lifted up for his glorification, and through it for God to be glorified (v31)." (Maloney, *Sacra Pagina: John*, p 385.1)
- 13.32 "The close relationship of the Father and the Son means that as one's nature is manifested so is the identity of the other. Christ's love reveals God's love and God's love confirms Christ's." (Kysar, ACNT: *John*, p 216.0)
- 13.32 "At *once* (*euthys*) signals the imminence of the crucifixion-resurrection (cf v33 below) and implies perhaps that, as distinct from some future eschatology, the glorification of Christ need not be postponed until the parousia but occurs in Good Friday and Easter." (Kysar, ACNT: *John*, p 216.0)
- 13.33-35 "A unique quality of love, inspired by the love Jesus had for "his own", will single out followers of Jesus (v35). There will shortly be a time when Jesus will no longer be with them and they will not be able to go where Jesus is (cf v33). In that time of absence they are to repeat the love of Jesus and thus render present the lifestyle of

Jesus. (v34-35)." Maloney, *Sacra Pagina: John*, p 386.0)

- 13.34-35 "the emphasis of this commandment is on a love *within* the community (cf 15.12) and nothing is said of loving those outside the community (contrast Mt 5.43-45). Given the situation of the Johannine church (cf Introduction), it is not surprising that what is nurtured here is a kind of sectarian love. It should not be forgotten, however, that the believers are "sent" into the world for others—a world God loves (3.16; cf 20.21)." (Kysar, ACNT: *John*, p 218.0)
- 13.35 "13:35 implies that a community of love is a statement of evangelism: 'by this shall all know' (see also the purpose of unity: 'that the world may believe' 17:21). This is not airy-fairy invisible unity but the kind of caring in community which can be seen and experienced. Christians and Christian communities are to model among themselves the love they have seen and experienced in Christ." (Loader, "First Thoughts", ¶8)