

Greater Hartford Conference, New England Synod, ELCA
Pericope Study for Sunday, August 25, 2013 – Lectionary 21C
 Presented Tue 8/20/13 by Pastor Richard M Burgess

Collect / Prayer of the Day (ELW)

O God, mighty and immortal, you know that as fragile creatures surrounded by great dangers, we cannot by ourselves stand upright. Give us strength of mind and body, so that even when we suffer because of human sin, we may rise victorious through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Collect / Prayer of the Day (LBW)

God of all creation, you reach out to call people of all nations to your kingdom. As you gather disciples from near and far, count us also among those who boldly confess your Son Jesus Christ as Lord. (94)

Suggested Sermon Titles (Use at your own risk.)	Is	Heb	Lk
If You Love Your Country, Don't Pray for It – Feed the Poor!	X		
Not Justice & Compassion Instead of the Sabbath – Justice & Compassion Are the Sabbath			X
Honor the Sabbath; Brighten Your World	X		
Don't Be an Esau!		X	
Sinai versus Zion – Choose Your Mountain		X	
Is Your World Shaken? Will You Remain?		X	
A Kingdom that Cannot Be Shaken		X	
People Trump the Sabbath			X
Loose Those Bonds!			X
Jesus' Enemies Are Put to Shame!			X
The Crooked Have Been Made Straight!			X

Lesson I: Isaiah 58:9b–14 (NRSV)

^{9b}If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

¹¹The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

¹²Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many
generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

¹³If you refrain from trampling the sabbath,
from pursuing your own interests on my holy
day;

if you call the sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
serving your own interests, or pursuing your
own affairs;

¹⁴then you shall take delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride upon the heights of
the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor
Jacob,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

Is 58.1-12 “Beginning as it does with a command to a prophet to bring a charge and then passing over into a conditional promise of blessing, it is symptomatic of the coming together of prophetic and liturgical speech which is in harmony with the change which came over prophecy after the return.” (Westermann, *Old Testament Library: Isaiah 40-66*, p 333.1)

Is 58.9b-14 “The inseparability of worship from the life of justice and compassion thus is reaffirmed and held up as the only reliable foundation for a people trying to rebuild a nation after a period of calamity.” (Hanson, *Interpretation: Isaiah 40-66*, p 206.2)

Is 58.9b-12 “. . . in the light of the present dire circumstances of postexilic Jerusalem, which still

awaits longingly the full entrance of God’s rule in a new age of redemption.” (Childs, *Old Testament Library: Isaiah*, p 480.3) How might these words apply to our present time?

Is 58.9b-10 “Yahweh’s favor depends on the conditions contained in two statements. If those conditions are satisfied then Yahweh’s favor is assured. “The two ‘ifs’ here envision a social practice that is built upon genuine sharing of social power and social goods.” (Nelson, “Text Studies”)

Is 58.8 10-11 “persons who have thus experienced the restoration of human community find that they have simultaneously become reconciled with God. Healing encompasses all aspects of their existence.” (Hanson, *Interpretation: Isaiah 40-66*, p 206.1)

Is 58.10 “*if you offer your food*: The phrase “if you offer your food to the hungry” is based on the Greek Septuagint text. The Hebrew text supports the RSV translation “if you pour yourself out for the hungry” and provides the richer meaning. The wordplay here is deliberate: If you pour out your *nepheš* [NE-phesh], Hebrew for “self” or “soul” and satisfy the *nepheš* of the afflicted (58.10), the LORD will satisfy your *nepheš* (58.11). This is not a bargain but a promise: as you give yourself for the sake of the other you find your true self (Mt 10.39). The gift of self will provide for the needs of the other (58.6-7) but will go beyond mere food (Mt 4.4; Acts 3.6).” (Lutheran Study Bible)

Is 58.11 “Now the imagery of the transformation of the wilderness into a garden (43.20; 44.3) has been applied to the people themselves: “You will be like a well-watered garden, and like a spring whose waters do not fail” (.11).” (Childs, *Old Testament Library: Isaiah*, p 480.2) RMB: Note that gardens and springs have a purpose beyond themselves, to nourish and sustain others than themselves.

Is 58.13-14 “Acts of loving kindness toward the neighbor do not exhaust the life of faith. They **culminate** in worship.” (Hanson, *Interpretation: Isaiah 40-66*, p 206.2) (RMB: emphasis mine)

Is 58.13 It is “significant that the old apodictic commandment and the articles in the penal code relating to it (Ex 31.15: whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death) had now apparently become a dead letter. This is what rendered the parenthesis with promises attached

necessary. Holding out the prospect of such rewards for keeping the Sabbath would have been inconceivable in the older days.” (Westermann, *Old Testament Library: Isaiah 40-66*, p 341 v31 ¶1)

Is 58.13 “The ideal of Sabbath observance proposed here is found in no other passage of the OT. In the post-exilic period, the Sabbath became a day of genuine religious joy. It is mentioned in rabbinical literature. The Sabbath observance was not a burden: it liberated man for a meeting with God.” (McKenzie, *Anchor Bible: Second Isaiah*, p 165 v13.1)

Is 58.13 “The key phrase of the criticism was that in the past Israel pursued its own business. It is as a directly opposite action of obedience to God’s affairs that the theological role of the Sabbath emerges.” (Childs, *Old Testament Library: Isaiah*, p 481.1)

Is 58.1-14 “A nation must be rebuilt upon a foundation that is both consistently moral and deeply spiritual if the calamities of the past are not to be repeated. No aspect of the nation’s life therefore escapes prophetic scrutiny. For every aspect of life is within the domain of God’s concern.” (Hanson, *Interpretation: Isaiah 40-66*, p 207.1)

Lesson II: Hebrews 12:18–29 (NRSV)

¹⁸You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, ¹⁹and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. ²⁰(For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death." ²¹Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear.") ²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

²⁵See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! ²⁶At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven." ²⁷This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what is shaken — that is, created things — so that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; ²⁹for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

Heb 12.15-16 "Thus (the author of Hebrews) urges (the reader) to "see to it that no one becomes like Esau" (12.16). Indeed, they are to look not only to themselves but to every member of the community." (Gench, *Westminster Bible Companion: Hebrews and James*, p 71.2)

Heb 12.18-29 "But these mountains (Sinai & Zion) do not bespeak Paul's familiar contrast between legalistic demand and gracious promise, between the law and the gospel. Rather they signify the visible and the invisible, earth and heaven, time and eternity. The chronological contrast of old and new, of past and future, which informs Paul's thought, also appears in Hebrews, but it is for all practical purposes absorbed into the spatial scheme of above and below, eternity and time."

(Smith, *ACNT: Hebrews*, p 163.4)

Heb 12.18-29 "The road to Mount Sinai is well-traveled, downhill most of the way, has plenty of fast food restaurants, and looks a great deal more comfortable than the rocky and narrow high road that climbs up to Mount Zion." (Long, *Interpretation: Hebrews*, p 136.4)

Heb 12.18-24 "This contrast between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, between the old covenant and the new, is vividly drawn and serves as Hebrews' grand finale. However, contemporary Christians must exercise caution in their interpretation of this comparison, for it is overdrawn and presents a caricature of Judaism as a joyless religion based on legalism, in which God is remote and unavailable. Clearly this is an exaggerated distortion of Jewish faith." (Gench, *Westminster Bible Companion: Hebrews and James*, p 72.1)

Heb 12.18-21 "the Preacher employs Sinai as a negative sign, a symbol of everything that goes awry in religion when it is severed from the high-priestly ministry of Christ (7.1-10.39)." (Long, *Interpretation: Hebrews*, p 137.2)

Heb 12.18 "The word translated "come" is not lightly chosen. It is best translated "approach" and it is one of the Preacher's favorite words to refer to the bold and confident access to God possible in Christ." (Long, *Interpretation: Hebrews*, p 138.1)

Heb 12.20 "Thus the author's description is focused not so much on underscoring the majesty or holiness of the first covenant as on demonstrating with words of Scripture that Sinai was touchable and that it therefore represents a lower level of reality, as holy as that mountain may have been." (Smith, *ACNT: Hebrews*, p 164.2)

Heb 12.22-24 "Mount Zion and the heavenly city are the ultimate destination toward which believers journey (see 13.14). ¶Yet the ultimate reality that Hebrews describes is in some sense already enjoyed in the present, in the midst of the journey itself: "You *have come* to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God" (12.22)." (Gench, *Westminster Bible Companion: Hebrews and James*, p 71.5-6)

Heb 12.22-23 "some who have described Christian worship have drawn a similar picture to the Preacher's view of Zion. In heaven right now, they say, there is a festive and ceaseless party underway, with angels fluttering around in joy

and the saints swinging from the chandeliers. Every so often the floor of heaven opens up and this whole spree descends into ordinary time and space; this is Christian worship.” (Long, *Interpretation: Hebrews*, p 138.5)

Heb 12.24 “*the blood of Abel*: “...Abel’s blood cried for vengeance while Jesus’ blood speaks reconciliation.” (Nelson, “Text Studies”)

Heb 12.25-29 “Having reminded potential “Esau” of the benefits of Christ’s work, Hebrews urges them one last time not to barter these blessings (see 12.25-29). Those who reject such an incomparable gift cannot expect to escape God’s judgment.” (Gench, *Westminster Bible Companion: Hebrews and James*, p 72.2)

Heb 12.25-27 “what is promised is the destruction or removal of *what is shaken*, and not merely their transformation. The whole visible world will vanish *in order that what cannot be shaken may remain*, so that finally only the spiritual reality of God’s kingship and the heavenly city will abide alone and unrivaled forever.” (Smith, *ACNT: Hebrews*, p 166.4)

Heb 12.26-28 “like Sinai, Zion has fire and shaking, but under the new covenant these experiences are transformed.” (Long, *Interpretation: Hebrews*, p 139.5)

Heb 12.27-29 “Sinai and Zion are the same place: the dwelling of the holy god There *are* two paths, two ways to travel, but they both meet at the top of the same mountain.” (Long, *Interpretation: Hebrews*, p 140.3)

Heb 12.27 If heaven & earth, the created realms, are “shaken” (destroyed?), then what of our created bodies? Will there be new resurrection bodies? “A new heaven and a new earth” (Rev 21.1)? Is there some mind / body and spirit / matter dualism here? What about ecology? (RMB)

Heb 12.28 The recipients of the letter “have received “a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (12.28), which is to say that in the midst of a complex and changing world, Christians have something secure on which to base their lives and hopes: the reign of God, which has come into their midst through Jesus Christ and will one day be established in fullness on the earth. . . . ¶thus, in the midst of impermanence, there is a sure reality on which we can rely: Jesus Christ, whom Hebrews describes as “the same yesterday and today and forever” (13.8).” (Gench, *Westminster*

Gospel: Luke 13:10–17 (NRSV)

¹⁰Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." ¹³When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. ¹⁴But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day." ¹⁵But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" ¹⁷When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

My spell checker and dictionary both think I should capitalize "Sabbath". The NRSV doesn't. What do you think? (RMB)

Lk 13.10-17 "this episode is on the border between a miracle-story and a pronouncement-story; and M Dibelius (*FTG* 97) rightly recognized its "hybrid form". (Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, p 1011.0)

Lk 13.10 *teaching in one of the synagogues* "This is the fulfillment of the hopes of Israel, the Messiah teaching in the synagogues and later in the temple (19.47-21.38). But is it an occasion of joy or judgment?" (Tiede, *ACNT: Luke*, p 249.3)

Lk 13.10 "In Luke's own day, Jerusalem and the temple had been destroyed, but there were synagogues in every city (Acts 15.21)." (Craddock, *Interpretation: Luke*, p 170.0)

Lk 13.12-13 Jesus "recognized her plight and addressed her directly, which was probably a violation of synagogue customs in itself. Then to heal her, he touched her. This is almost as shocking an act as when he touched the litter of the dead man from Nain (7.14) or when the woman with the flow of blood touched him (8.44-

46). Luke's sense for the human dimensions of these encounters is most impressive." (Tiede, *ACNT: Luke*, p 250.1)

Lk 13.13-14 "The stooped woman apparently had come to worship, though the synagogue ruler spoke to the crowd about coming on the Sabbath to be healed (.14). At any rate, the woman does not approach Jesus, makes no request of him, and nothing is said of her faith. Once healed, she praises God (.13). In this regard, the story is similar to healings reported in the Gospel of John in which Jesus takes the initiative and the healing becomes a witness to or a sign of a larger truth (Jn 5.1-18; ch 9)." (Craddock, *Interpretation: Luke*, p 170.0)

Lk 13.14 "*the crowd* . . . the leader's warning is addressed to the people, not merely as a criticism of Jesus' action on the Sabbath, but as a warning to them about him." (Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, p 1013 v14.2)

Lk 13.14 "*There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured and not on the sabbath day.*: The rabbinic position on healings was that only those which are necessary to save a life are permitted." (Nelson, "Text Studies")

Lk 13.14 "The objection to the healing is based on Ex 20.9-10 Dt 5.12-14." (Harper Collins Study Bible)

Ex 20.9-10: "9Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 10But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns." (NRSV) (Dt 5.12-14 parallels Ex 20.9-10)

Lk 13.14 "the charge of hypocrite (.15) is deserved at least because the leader does not confront Jesus himself with his irritation but instead harangues the crowd, a classic ploy of deflected anger." (Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: Luke*, p 212 v14.1) RMB: Ie, "triangulation".

Lk 13.15-16 "The controversy plays on the words "bound" and "loose". Jesus loosed the woman from the infirmity in which Satan had bound her." (Craddock, *Interpretation: Luke*, p 170.1) Greek note: "bound" = *deō* versus "loose" = *luō*.

Lk 13.15-16 *hypocrites*: Jesus "is not merely accusing them of being "legalists", but attacking a kind of scriptural interpretation which prevents

them from discerning the present saving activity of God.” (Tiede, *ACNT: Luke*, p 250.3)

Lk 13.15-16 “In this case, the deflected objection of the synagogue ruler leads Jesus to a more direct charge of hypocrisy: the allowances made for the “loosing” of animals on the Sabbath to give them relief is a light thing, compared to the heavy matter of “loosing” a human person (and a “daughter of Abraham”) from the bondage to Satan. Indeed, faced with such a human need, it is *necessary* to heal on the Sabbath!” ((Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: Luke*, p 214.2)

Lk 13.16-17 “Jesus is challenging the dominion of Satan, and those who are piously defending the Sabbath have not discerned what is happening. More is at stake than mere human religiosity. Jesus has suggested that his critics are in danger of aiding Satan in his reign of bondage.” (Tiede, *ACNT: Luke*, p 251.1)

Lk 13.16 “the impersonal verb *dei*, lit “it is necessary” (.16) alludes to the necessary realization of God’s plan of salvation-history, working itself out in Jesus’ ministry (see pp 179-180). The irony in the episode is seen in that the opposition to Jesus’ curing act comes from a “leader of the synagogue”, who himself uses the same impersonal verb *dei* (.14) to express the human obligation of work (on six other days!).” (Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, p 1011.1)

Lk 13.16 “*Satan has bound her*: . . . Luke uses *deō* (“bind”) in the this metaphorical sense only here, but the notion of being bound by evil is obviously present in “release of captives” (4.18), exorcism of the violent demoniac (8.26-39) and the dumb demoniac (11.4) as well as in the “release” of sins (5.20, 23; 7.47). This connection is important, for the essence of the Sabbath was to be a “rest”, that is a time of “liberation” as the notion of the Sabbath year indicated, when debts were redeemed and slaves were freed.” (Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: Luke*, p 212 v16.2)

Lk 13.16 “*has kept her tied up*. Ie like an animal tethered to a trough, but even worse. The figurative expression characterizes her crippling infirmity (cf 8.29; Mk 7.35); the evil which afflicts her is worse than bonds tethering animals to troughs.” (Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, p 1013 v16.3)

Lk 13.17 “*his opponents were put to shame*: He calls them “hypocrites,” a harsh insult for

providing for the humane care of animals while denying such care to human members of the community.” (Nelson, “Text Studies”)

Lk 13.17 “The house is divided: (Jesus’) adversaries are put to shame, all the people rejoice. Such is the effect of the presence of Jesus and of a sign of the in-breaking of God’s reign over the forces of Satan. The event dramatized 12.49-53: the peace of the way things have always been is shattered by the word and deed of Jesus. If helping a stooped woman creates a crisis, then crisis it has to be.” (Craddock, *Interpretation: Luke*, p 170.1)

Lk 13.10-17 “Does Luke insinuate still subtler signals into the text? Are we to connect the eighteen people on whom the Temple wall fell with the eighteen years the daughter of Abraham remained bent under the bondage of Satan? And if so, is her “standing up straight” a minor variation of Luke’s theme of the rise and fall of many in Israel (2.35)? Perhaps so, just as her standing to glorify God will remind us of the saying about the return of the Son of Man in 21.28: “when these things begin to happen, stand up straight, lift up your heads, for the time of your liberation has come.”” (Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: Luke*, p 215.1)

