

Sunday, January 26, 2025 – Third Sunday after the Epiphany

First Reading: Nehemiah 8:1-10

Returning from exile in 538 BC, the Jewish people rebuilt the Temple (Ezra 3-6).

Under the leadership of Nehemiah in the mid 400's BC they rebuilt the walls (Nehemiah 1-6).

"Hand Me Another Brick" by Chuck Swindoll.

Soon after - under the leadership of Ezra – they rebuild the covenant community.

1 - All the people (of Israel) gathered together into the square before the Water Gate.

3-4 – Ezra read the law (Deuteronomy?) from early morning until midday; the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

5 – When Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, all the people stood up.

Ezra 10: 9 – All the people sat in the open square, trembling because of this matter and because of the heavy rain.

8 - They read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

9-10 - Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep. Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Law and Gospel – the Law afflicts the comfortable – the Gospel comforts the afflicted.

Psalm: Psalm 19

1 - The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims its maker's handiwork.

3-4 - Although they have no words or language, and their voices are not heard, their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message to the ends of the world.

4-5 - The sun rejoices like a champion to run its course.

Arizona dark skies.

When have you experienced the heavens declaring the glory of God? What was it like?

Runner's high.

7-9 - The teaching of the LORD is perfect and revives the soul;

the testimony of the LORD is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.

The statutes of the LORD are just and rejoice the heart;

the commandment of the LORD is clear and gives light to the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is clean and endures forever;

the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

How and when have you found God's Word to be perfect, soul-reviving, sure, wisdom-giving, just, reason for rejoicing, clear, light-giving, clean, forever-enduring, true, and righteous?

Cf. Psalm 119 – written by Ezra?

176 verses all saying the same thing – twenty-two sets of eight – one set for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Who is the most compulsive person that you know? Comment re the TV program "Monk."

10-11 - More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold, sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.
By them is your servant enlightened, and in keeping them there is great reward.

12 - Who can detect one's own offenses? Cleanse me from my secret faults.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

*Implications of the church's being the body of Christ –
Need to stay connected to the head and to the other parts of the body
All parts are important
What each part can do is for the benefit and well-being of the entire body
What happens to one part affects the whole body*

15-17 - If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

18 - God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.
24 - God has so arranged the body.

What part of the body are you?

21 - The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

26 - If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

28-31 - God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. But strive for the greater gifts.

Gospel: Luke 4:14-21

Sermon on this passage – "Jesus' Inaugural Address"

16-19 - When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written (Isaiah 61):
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

The Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) – everyone was able to push the great reset button.

Practice of gleaning (Ruth 2).

The only time in the Bible where Jesus reads from the Bible.

Imagine handing Jesus a Bible and asking Him to select a passage to read.

If you were to return to the church where you grew up and were asked to select a passage of Scripture to read, what passage would you read?