

Lessons for Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 21, 2016

Psalm 50:1–15 (*Antiphon: Psalm 50:23*) ~ *The Lord calls his people to accountability in trust rather than sacrifice.*

Isaiah 66:18–23 ~ *God will gather His people from all nations into a new heaven and new earth.*

Hebrews 12:4–24 (25–29) ~ *God disciplines His children to yield the fruit of righteousness in their lives.*

Luke 13:22–30 ~ *Jesus taught that many will seek to enter the kingdom, but will reject His invitation.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: God's Real, Holy Future

In Christ our Lord, God has promised us a future that is real and holy. Our lessons today assure us that heaven is no "pie in the sky by and by". It is as real as the sacrifices that were offered in the temple on Mount Zion. It is no mundane, "realistic expectation". It is as holy as the glory of the Lord God of heaven and earth. If we belittle this hope or reject God's promise, the door will be closed; we will be locked outside. But when we know the King and the blood of his new covenant, God's real, holy future is ours!

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord God of all nations, thank you for your gracious love in Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. Help me reach out to people of every tribe and nation, of every community and class, to share with them the promise of your presence and the hope of your glory. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: Learning to trust and depend on God shows itself in how we use the material blessings he has placed into our hands. We learn to extend God's grace through our patient care and assistance to those in need, never failing to speak the Word of God which propels the loving deed.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, help us strive for peace with everyone,
And learn to trust You always, and rejoice,
Employ these gifts to lead the wayward ones
That they may know Your love and hear Your voice. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: "He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored." (*Proverbs 13:18 NIV*) We are inclined to protest suffering in our lives instead of learning lessons of patience and dependence on God's mercy. When we are too self-assured to receive instruction, we miss the invitation to Christ's kingdom; the Master says, "I do not know where you come from." God draws us in from all the nations of the earth with His grace through Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, whose blood speaks us righteous.