



BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

Pentecost 5
Proper 9 (A)
July 5, 2020

RCL: Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67; Psalm 45:11-18; Romans 7:15-25a; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67

Providence is being in the right place at the right time, as designed by God. It is trusting in the well-timed fruition of opportunity and fulfillment of future outcomes as orchestrated by divine intervention. A person receives a phone call at the exact moment – a person meets another at a certain time or place, changing the course of their life – a servant finds the woman intended to participate in the next phase of Israel’s narrative – things seem to finally fall perfectly into place.

The story of Laban trusting God to show him the woman destined to be Isaac’s wife is a providential meeting of people in a divinely orchestrated situation. Through faithful hearts that were postured towards God, Laban met Rebekah at the well and brought her home to Isaac. The eventual meeting of Rebekah and Isaac mirrors the eternal love story between God and his people. Like Rebekah, we gather tangible water to quench our biological thirst from the well, while God has sent his servant, his very Son, to find us and bring us home – to show us the water from which, if we drink, we will never thirst again. Perhaps providence will connect us to the people God intends and will direct our steps as divinely intended. Perhaps we may be like Rebekah, lowering our veil when we meet the Father, accepting the joy of being loved by him eternally.

- Do you see places of providence in your own life? How does it feel to be aware of possible divine intervention?
- What would it take to submit to divinely orchestrated providence with the same level of faith as Laban and Rebekah?

Psalm 45:11-18

Psalm 45 is a psalm of a royal wedding, where the bride is depicted in her beauty and extravagance with the promise of faithfulness and desire to fulfill the role placed before her. This is a time of joy and expectation of a new future! The expression within this poetic imagery parallels with the church, which is Christ’s bride, and the eschatological expectation of fulfillment and a new future. The believer is asked to listen closely and turn towards our Lord, focusing completely on him as our new family. We are to use the favor we have been given and our gifts to honor God, for he delights in us. We can meet God in worship with joy and gladness and attain to someday enter his palace. As children of God, we are heirs that will inherit the earth someday and

have been tasked with transmitting the Gospel from generation to generation. May we praise the Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

- Is there a role placed before you that you have been asked to fulfill? How do you feel about it?
- However you discern your “beauty” and “gifts”, how can you use them to honor God and worship him in joy and gladness?

Romans 7:15-25a

A wise professor once said that, for whatever reason, people really love their personal sin, even if they hate it; they love the feeling of comfort and familiarity that can be found in turning back to the vices that they hate again and again. Original sin has predisposed mankind to this kind of compulsive attraction to things that are not good for us and harm us. Why do we like to roll around in what we hate? And even more so, why do we not have the willpower or resolve to resist sin on our own?

Paul recognized this very real difficulty! He knew that nothing good dwelled within him, within his flesh, and although he deeply desired to do right and do good, he could not. He could not, even by the law of God that he loved, because it was not possible to do right or good and avoid sin by himself. It is not possible for us to do on our own, either. We need Christ. It is only with the indwelling of Jesus that our hearts and minds can be realigned to proper focus, allowing us to do right and do good through Christ, and resist the sin we hate.

- What sin do you find yourself turning back to, time and again? Try and recognize your disdain (as well as the attraction to) this sin.
- How could this change if Jesus realigned your perspective? How could his strength help you?

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

A yoke is a large and heavy piece of agricultural plow equipment, used to harness 2 animals to a cart that they then pull. A yoke can also be used with a heavier piece on the larger, stronger animal, and a lighter portion harnessed to the new or younger animal being trained. The yoke was designed to better distribute the weight of the load and also to give mechanical capability to the work the animal was set to do. Naturally, in great Jesus fashion, the Lord asks his followers to bridle themselves with a bulky and heavy device so they might experience a lighter load and ease their burden. So, what is the yoke of Jesus? It is a place of rest where we will find humility and gentleness and learn his ways. We must first accept the daunting yoke of Jesus’ relationship to experience the easing he speaks of. The yoke of Jesus will provide us with the mechanical capability to do the work we have been called to – but we first must be attached to him – physically and spiritually. We may just be surprised with how light the yoke actually is, and how much easier we operate when connected with to Christ.

- What are you yoked to in your life right now? Jesus? The world? A person? Something else?
- Have you ever experienced a lighter load by taking more on? How might this be different?

Audrey Sutton enjoys going on weekend adventures with her husband and two daughters, where they spend time outdoors or travelling to unusual or new places within driving distance. Before seminary, she spent her time as a youth minister and full-time mom. She enjoys reading and writing, painting and intentional time alone with God.