

## SCRIPTURE READING FOR OCTOBER 16, 2022 @ CAPC OAKLAND

### Deuteronomy 10:10-22 CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION (CEV)

Moses said to Israel:

<sup>10</sup> When I had taken the second set of stones up the mountain, I spent 40 days and nights there, just as I had done before. Once again, the Lord answered my prayer and did not destroy you. <sup>11</sup> Instead, God told me, "Moses, get ready to lead the people into the land that I promised their ancestors."

Moses said:

<sup>12</sup> People of Israel, what does the Lord your God want from you? The Lord wants you to respect and follow him, to love and serve him with all your heart and soul, <sup>13</sup> and to obey his laws and teachings that I am giving you today. Do this, and all will go well for you.

<sup>14</sup> Everything belongs to the Lord your God, not only the earth and everything on it, but also the sky and the highest heavens. <sup>15</sup> Yet the Lord loved your ancestors and wanted them to belong to him. So he chose them and their descendants rather than any other nation, and today you are still his people.

<sup>16</sup> Remember your agreement with the Lord and stop being so stubborn. <sup>17</sup> The Lord your God is more powerful than all other gods and lords, and his tremendous power is to be feared. His decisions are always fair, and you cannot bribe him to change his mind. <sup>18</sup> The Lord defends the rights of orphans and widows. *He cares for foreigners and gives them food and clothing.* <sup>19</sup> And you should also care for them, because you were foreigners in Egypt.

<sup>20</sup> Respect the Lord your God, be faithful, and serve only him, making promises in his name. <sup>21</sup> Offer your praises to him, because you have seen him work such terrifying miracles for you.

<sup>22</sup> When your ancestors went to live in Egypt, there were only 70 of them. But the Lord has blessed you, and now there are more of you than there are stars in the sky.

### Isaiah 6:1-12 CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION (CEV)

<sup>1</sup> In the year that King Uzziah died, I [Isaiah] had a vision of the Lord. He was on his throne high above, and his robe filled

### LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Deuteronomy is the fifth and last book of the Torah (in Judaism), where it is called Devarim (Hebrew: דְּבָרִים, literally meaning '[the] words [of Moses]') and the fifth book of the Christian Old Testament. It is mainly a series of three sermons delivered to the Israelites by Moses on the Plains of Moab, shortly before they enter the Promised Land. It's a reminder to the people of who they are and the God that they serve. Our section for today is a summarizing of sorts of the 10 commandments, given in Deuteronomy 5:1-21: specifically the first three commandments -- "<sup>6</sup> I am the Lord your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt where you were slaves. <sup>7</sup> Do not worship any god except me. <sup>8</sup> Do not make idols that look like anything in the sky or on earth or in the ocean under the earth. <sup>9</sup> Don't bow down and worship idols. <sup>11</sup> Do not misuse my name." 5:6-8

I had taken the second set of stones:: This story is told in Exodus 33 & 34.

The Lord defends the orphans, widows, foreigners: This God is known not just by actions but also by specific relationships: The Lord your God is the "Father of orphans and defender of widows is God in his holy habitation." (Psalm 68:5) And "The Lord watches over the immigrants; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin." (Psalm 146:9)

stars in the sky:: this harkens back to the blessing-promise made by God to Abraham and Sarah. "<sup>3</sup> I will keep my promise to your father Abraham ... <sup>4</sup> I will give you as many descendants as there are stars in the sky, and I will give your descendants all of this land. They will be a blessing to every nation on earth, <sup>5</sup> because Abraham did obeyed my voice and kept my commandments". Genesis 26:3-5

the temple. <sup>2</sup> Flaming creatures with six wings each were flying over him. They covered their faces with two of their wings and their bodies with two more. They used the other two wings for flying, <sup>3</sup> as they shouted,

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord All-Powerful!  
The earth is filled with your glory.”

<sup>4</sup> As they shouted, the doorposts of the temple shook, and the temple was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> Then I cried out, “I’m doomed! Everything I say is sinful, and so are the words of everyone around me. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord All-Powerful.”

<sup>6</sup> One of the flaming creatures flew over to me *with a burning coal* that it had taken from the altar with a pair of metal tongs. <sup>7</sup> It touched my lips with the hot coal and said, “This has touched your lips. Your sins are forgiven, and you are no longer guilty.”

<sup>8</sup> After this, I heard the Lord ask, “Is there anyone I can send? Will someone speak for us?”

“I’ll go,” I answered. “Send me!”

<sup>9</sup> Then the Lord told me to go and speak this message to the people:

“You will listen and listen,  
**BUT** never understand.  
You will look and look,  
**BUT** never see.”

The Lord also said,

<sup>10</sup> “Make these people stubborn!  
Make them stop up  
their ears,  
cover their eyes,  
and fail to understand.  
Don't let them turn to me  
and be healed.”

<sup>11</sup> Then I asked the Lord, “How long will this last?”

The Lord answered:

Until their towns are destroyed and their houses are deserted, until their fields are empty, <sup>12</sup> and I have sent them far away, leaving their land in ruins. <sup>13</sup> If only a tenth of the people are left, even they will be destroyed. But just as stumps remain after trees have been cut down, some of my chosen ones will be left.

#### LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Isaiah is the title given to the collection of prophecies attributed to this great Hebrew Prophet who lived during the time of the Exile to Babylon (8th-century BC). Written in poetry, it’s a sort of symphony of images, metaphors and statements that seeks to speak of everything that is involved in being the people of God – in all its simplicity and complexity.

**Holy:** This is the name that Isaiah often gives to God in his poetry. The word Holy in Hebrew is *קֹדֶשׁ* pronounced /ko'-desh/ meaning that which is set apart, sacred, separated from that which isn't sacred/special/of God. For us the word often mean something more along the lines of "religious or morally good" - or even a self-righteousness in a negative holier than thou way. But that's not what the original meaning of the word is.

*with a burning coal:* A burning coal is a symbol/image often used in the Hebrew Bible being associated with purification and “making holy” – setting something apart – making it more like God. *Check out* (Leviticus 16:12, Exodus 24:17; Isaiah 34:14; Psalm 18:8).

**stubborn ::** this is a common critique God makes of the Israelites, often associated with being “hard hearted”– See Deuteronomy 10:16. The word is *קָשָׁה* Pronounced /qashah/ meaning to be hard, severe or fierce, burdensome like a hard yoke imposed by king; being hard, stiff-necked, stubborn, obstinate. It's used to describe Pharaoh who would not free the Israelites from slavery. Exodus 7:3; 13:15

Matthew 13:10-17  
CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION (CEV)

<sup>10</sup> Jesus' disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you use *parable* stories to speak to the people?"

<sup>11</sup> Jesus answered:

I have explained the secrets about the kingdom of heaven to you, but not to others. <sup>12</sup> Everyone who has something will be given more. But people who don't have anything will lose even what little they have. <sup>13</sup> I use *parable* stories when I speak to them **BECAUSE** when they look, they cannot see, and when they listen, they cannot hear or understand. <sup>14</sup> So God's promise came true, just as the prophet Isaiah had said,

"These people will listen and listen,  
but never understand.  
They will look and look, but never see.  
<sup>15</sup> All of them have *stubborn* minds!  
They refuse to listen; they cover their eyes.  
They cannot see or hear or understand.  
If they could,  
they would turn to me,  
and I would heal them."

<sup>16</sup> But God has blessed you, because your eyes can see and your ears can hear! <sup>17</sup> Many prophets and good people were eager to see what you see and to hear what you hear. But I tell you they did not see or hear.

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:**

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- In our first reading Moses speaks repeatedly about remembering and respecting. What is he reminding the people to respect? Why?
- Why would God set apart Isaiah to have him communicate God's will to the people of Israel and then make it so that they can't understand?
- Why would Jesus quote Isaiah 6 in saying that he teaches in parables? Does he not want people to understand him? Or is there something else maybe going on?
- How do you struggle to understand God today, or the words of Scripture? How do we struggle as a church? How are we struggling as the Church in the United States of America?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL  
CONNECTIONS

Matthew is one of the four gospels. Gospel means good news, it's the title given to the four books in the Bible that tell the life, actions, and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. It was composed in Greek, probably sometime after 70 CE, with evident dependence on the earlier Gospel According to Mark.

*parable*:: Most of the parables of Jesus refer to simple everyday things, used to illustrate a deeper lesson or vision. A parable is a story that's meant to change us as we sit with it. A parable is not an allegory: an image, poem, or story whose interpretation can communicate a hidden meaning. A parable is like a metaphor in that it uses concrete, perceptible phenomena to illustrate abstract ideas. The source definition of the word "parable" means a placement side by side for the purpose of comparison. Approximately one third of the recorded teachings of Jesus in the Gospels are parables.

**BECAUSE** :: curiously Mark in his gospel changes this saying rather that Jesus tells parables "in order that the people look but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand" – Mark 4:10-12. So which is it? Is Jesus hiding his message, or the people just not getting it?