

PENTECOST: IN FAITH WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 10)

July 15, 2007

Deuteronomy 30:9-14

Psalm 25:1-10

Colossians 1:1-14

Luke 10:25-37

Spelling It Out

In today's pop culture, nothing is left to the imagination; everything is spelled out: violence, sex, inappropriate behaviors. As a child, I grew up in a culture where things were not always spelled out, yet instinctively children knew where the boundaries were. Parents who engaged in adult conversation would often give young eavesdroppers "the eye," followed by a jerk of the head in a particular direction offsite. Sometimes, the foolhardy would feign ignorance of the interpretative message of "the eye" and stay put, only to be told in no uncertain terms to "move on."

Like recalcitrant children, we, too, sometimes look for excuses to wiggle out of being obedient to God. We bide our time in disobedience, waiting for God's commands to be spelled out. In the Deuteronomy pericope, Moses tells the people of Israel exactly what God expects of them, and he reminds them of their responsibility to be obedient. Forestalling any excuses, Moses tells them: "You know God's laws, and it isn't impossible to obey them. His commands aren't in heaven, ... No, these commands are nearby and you know them by heart. All you have to do is obey!" (Deuteronomy 30:11-12a; 14, *CEV*)

Moses had to spell it out. The Old Testament is replete with instances of Israel's continued disobedience, their repentance, and God's forgiveness. It is not enough to know God's Word -- what counts is our obedience to God's Word and our efforts at applying it to our lives.

In the Luke passage, Jesus spells it out for a wily expert in the Law of Moses who feigns ignorance and asks Jesus concerning the requirements for gaining eternal life. In his repartee with Jesus, the man eventually answers his own questions, indicating that one should love God and one's neighbors (Luke 10:27). Jesus commends the man for his answer and says, "If you do this, you will have eternal life" (Luke 10:28b, *CEV*). In an effort to show off his knowledge, the man ignores Jesus' response to "do," and challenges Jesus further on the concept of who is a neighbor. It is here that Jesus introduces the parable of the Good Samaritan.

At the end of his narrative, Jesus asks this expert in Mosaic teachings which of the people in the story acted in a neighborly fashion to the man who was beaten up by robbers (Luke 10:36). Again, the man responds correctly, to which Jesus responds, “Go and do the same!” (Luke 10:37b, *CEV*)

There is no wiggle room for disobedience. The Word of God clearly *spells out* that we need to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22, *KJV*). It is only by actively doing the will of God that we will become obedient and “live a life that honors the Lord” (Colossians 1:10a, *CEV*).

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Dorette Saunders who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Senior Editor in the Education Unit of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Slovenia – With prayers for God’s guidance, for the development of fundraising activities and new publications linked to “Year of the Bible,” and for strengthened links with all Churches; **Croatia** – With thanks to God for promoting Bible work among the Churches and the general public, for the ability to distribute free Scriptures to children in hospitals all around the country, and with prayers for the Sarc Bible revision and for ongoing work on the new translation; **Bosnia-Herzegovina** – With thanks to God that people are interested in the Bible despite the many challenges arising from a battered economy and infrastructure, and with prayers for the ability to provide Bibles at an affordable price, and for the finalizing of the Sarc Bible revision; **Serbia and Montenegro** – With prayers for God’s help with Scripture distribution and in reaching out to young people.

Activity Corner: “Spell It Out” Bible Game

Supplies needed: Bible; a SCRABBLE™ board and pieces or four sets of letters of the alphabet, with each letter written on squares of paper. Make an additional 6 sets of vowels.

Read the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Put the letters in a paper bag. Shake them up. Have the first person declare the word he/she is writing (taken from the Bible story). The first player draws a letter from the bag puts down the first letter (or passes). The next player puts down the second letter (or passes). Play goes around until the word is written. After each play, that player draws a letter from the bag to replace the letter he/she has used. Words must be written horizontally and vertically and can interlock. At the end of the game, decide together on what is the most important word in the story. Spell it out in unison.