



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11–17
TIME AFTER PENTECOST — LECTIONARY 24

FIRST READING: Exodus 32:7-14

A reading from Exodus.

⁷The LORD said to Moses, “Go down at once!
Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt,
have acted perversely;
⁸they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them;
they have cast for themselves an image of a calf,
and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said,
“These are your gods, O Israel,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”
⁹The LORD said to Moses,
“I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are.
¹⁰Now let me alone,
so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them;
and of you I will make a great nation.”

¹¹But Moses implored the LORD his God, and said,
“O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people,
whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power
and with a mighty hand?

¹²Why should the Egyptians say,
‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out
to kill them in the mountains,
and to consume them from the face of the earth’?
Turn from your fierce wrath;
change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people.

¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants,
how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them,
‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven,
and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants,
and they shall inherit it forever.’”

¹⁴And the LORD changed his mind
about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

FIRST READING

“And the Lord changed his mind” (verse 14). This amazing statement is the point of the reading. It underscores the intimate relationship which God establishes with people. Next to sending Jesus, this willingness to “change his mind” is God’s most surprising means of putting a human face on the divine. The reading calls for a sense of energetic debate between an angry God and a fearless leader and, at the end, a sense of wonder.

PSALMODY: Psalm 51:1-10

SECOND READING: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

A reading from First Timothy.

¹²I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service,

¹³even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence.

But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,

¹⁴and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners— of whom I am the foremost.

¹⁶But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example

to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life.

¹⁷To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

SECOND READING

Deep gratitude and an enormous sense of wonder at the depth of Jesus' love for sinners is what the people in the pew need to hear in this reading. This is not only Paul's story, but the story of every baptized person as well. It is your story. Make it sound personal.

GOSPEL: Luke 15:1-10

The holy gospel according to Luke.

¹Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus.

²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying,
“This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³So he told them this parable:

⁴“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.

⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’

⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

⁸“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?

⁹When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’

¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL

Set the scene carefully in the reading of verses 1 and 2. The grave tone at the outset demands grave expression in both voice and visage. A happier, more compassionate tone in verses 3-10 might be appropriately and helpfully captured in the reader's face as well. Here as in every reading, put your whole self into it.