

**“Reverence for the Lord is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the Lord are true; each one is fair.” (Ps. 19:9)**

**Neh. 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10** *“<sup>1</sup>All the people assembled with a unified purpose at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given for Israel to obey...<sup>8</sup>They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage.”* (Neh. 8:1, 8) Nehemiah was a great leader and manager. He had returned from Persia, where he had worked for the Persian king, even though a Jew. His charisma engaged the people and they made him their governor. Under his leadership the wall, which had been broken down for more than a century, was rebuilt and secure within 52 days – a remarkable feat! The Israelites were motivated to reform and a return to the traditions of their ancestors. With a unified purpose, they gathered in Jerusalem and requested Ezra the priest to read the Law of Moses (Gen. to Deut.) and explain the translation for those who had lost their grasp of the Hebrew language. That's a commitment – a strong statement for dedication to God!

**Ps. 19** *“<sup>7</sup>The instructions of the Lord are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup>The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living.”* (Ps. 19:7-8) King David recognized the same thing the Israelites told Nehemiah. God's laws are designed to bring life and well-being to any who will follow His decrees. *“<sup>11</sup>They are a warning to Your servant, a great reward for those who obey them.”* (Ps. 19:11) The instructions of the Lord are the source of true success in life. It was true 3,000 years ago and it is true today. The psalmist also wrote: *“<sup>12</sup>How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. <sup>13</sup>Keep Your servant from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin.”* (Ps. 19:12-13) Satan is busy trying to steal your soul. God's laws are your protection.

**Luke 4:14-21** *“<sup>16</sup>When He came to the village of Nazareth, His boyhood home, He went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. <sup>17</sup>The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him...”* (Luke 4:16-17a) Jesus went as usual to the synagogue for an opportunity to worship and share in learning with the other members of the town. The event described probably occurred in the first year of His ministry. Yet, reflecting the training of His childhood, He was not likely to miss the Sabbath worship in a local synagogue. As illustrated in the other passages, Jesus also knew the importance of hearing the messages preserved in Scripture. It is a shame that so many people are not aware of the intellectual growth that is possible by forming a connection with the Word of God. You will notice that Jesus did not sit at home and read in His easy chair. He made it His usual practice to attend His Church services. There is an increase in power when many Christians gather together. If you light a lamp in a room, the room is brightened. If you light many lamps the light is multiplied many times. That's the purpose of gathering together.

**1 Cor. 12:12-31a** *“<sup>27</sup>All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it...<sup>26</sup>If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.”* (1 Cor. 12:27, 26) Paul has written that the church is like our body. All the parts have an important reason for being there and all parts are interdependent upon the others. Anyone who has ever had an infected toenail can attest to the suffering the whole body endures when one small part is injured. Even though it is out of sight and often forgotten, that toe is essential for balance and movement as we walk around. Every part of the human body is essential. Every member in the church is essential. Often people think we are going to worship, to be a gift to God for what He has done for us. But the reality is that the Church is God's gift to us, we should participate in it.

**“<sup>1</sup>The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display His craftsmanship.” (Ps. 19:1)**

Next week's lectionary (Feb. 2): Jer. 1:4-10; Ps. 71:1-6;  
Luke 4:21-30; 1 Cor. 13:1-13