



Handout for week of 6/17/19 Luke 9: 11-17 & Gn. 14: 18-20

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Gn. 14: 18 And [Melchizedek](#) king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was priest of G-d the Most High. 19 And he blessed him, and said: 'Blessed be Abram of G-d Most High, Maker of heaven and earth; 20 and blessed be G-d the Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.' And he gave him a tenth of all.

COMMENTARY:

The Sunday lectionary selection is based on a three-year cycle, as you know.

This feast, once known as Corpus Christi, distributes its attention across the three years by themes. In year A, we hear about the Body of Christ. In year B, we hear about the Blood. This year, which is C, goes elsewhere. My sense is that it takes

“Remembrance” as its theme. You can judge for yourself.

Melchizedek, King of Salem, appears twice in the Old Testament, and both instances are in our readings for today, as the first reading and the response psalm. His name also appears numerous times in the New Testament book of Hebrews, in chapter 5 and 7.

In Genesis, Melchizedek appears suddenly, and disappears just as suddenly. His town—Salem—is thought to be the same as Jerusalem. His name combines the Hebrew words melek and zedeq, respectively meaning “king” and “justice.” He is both a king and a priest, a dual role that was common with ancient kingship. He blesses Abraham after the latter’s successful rescue of his kinsfolk and property from marauders. Because Melchizedek appears from nowhere, and then disappears again, he has prompted speculation and interest. Because his ritual involved bread and wine, he became a Christ figure for the author of Hebrews.

But because he came from Jerusalem, a town that David later captured for Israel, he also had Davidic associations for the Israelites. Psalm 110 belongs to a class of psalms that were written for Royal coronations for kings of the family of David. Another is Psalm 2. When the kingdom no longer existed due to the Babylonian conquest, these psalms were reread as referring to the great King to come, the Messiah. That too contributes part of Christian interest in this kingly figure. Hebrews 5 and 7 spend most of their time with this psalm, rather than the Genesis passage. Fr. Robert Beck

[More information](#) on Melchizedek