

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

*February 9, 2020 by Rev. Mark Brechin*

## **Commentary on Isaiah 58:1-9a** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

The theme of doing good and seeking justice echos back to Chapter 1:16-17. In the first chapter, the context was Temple sacrifices but now, that the Temple is gone, the context is fasting. The context may have changed but the people's heart has not. They still associate religious observance to righteousness. Their complaint is why does God not answer if their observance is done properly. Properly for Isaiah, however, means first a proper attitude in the heart toward others. A true fast is a fast from wickedness and toward right actions for the poor and naked. The list is similar to that of Matthew 25 during the judgment of the sheep and the goats.

## **Commentary on 1 Corinthians 2:1-12** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

After arguing that the foolish of God is greater than any human wisdom, Paul points out that he proclaimed not his own wisdom but rather Jesus Christ crucified. The statement about the "mystery of God" is in reference to a form of Greek religion called Gnosticism (the g is silent). Gnosticism argued that there was a secret knowledge embedded all people and, if you could access that knowledge, you would be divine. Many early Christians were drawn to Gnosticism which saw Jesus as the teacher and "way" to this secret knowledge. Paul's argument is that it is through the love that died on the cross and not some secret knowledge that reveals the power of God. The "divine" is not some hidden trait that meditation and contemplation can uncover. The Spirit is a gift of God through faith which imparts wisdom as we are ready to receive. The Spirit can not be controlled or manipulated. If a Christian is wise, it is only because they listen to the Spirit and humbly follow God's will in Christ Jesus.

## **Commentary on Matthew 5:13-20** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

What is food without taste or a scenic view without light? The law is lifeless without the Spirit which Matthew refers to as the "will of God". With the Spirit, the law brings life and righteousness. Righteousness for Matthew does not mean simply obedience but rather all of creation acting in harmony as God created. Striving toward righteousness is striving toward a restoration of the original goodness of creation. Jesus did not come to remove the law but to reveal its true purpose as light and salt to a tasteless and dark world. The law is not meant to be a burden on the backs of humanity but a guide back to fullness of life. This can only happen if the Spirit enlightens the law. As those who have been given the Spirit, we are the saltshakers and lamp bearers. We are not the law enforcers. One additional note, the Hebrew language was spoken long before it was written down. As the language began to be written, only consonants were used for example Hebrew would be Hbrw. Latter vowels were added not as letters but as dots, dashes, and apostrophes. This is why Jesus says "not one stroke of a letter".

## **Sermon "Salt and Light"** ([Sermon Video](#))

In a world of instant digital communication, we are overloaded with constant information. Is it any wonder that we often take things at face value. We rely on experts to delve below the surface and summarize the deeper meaning of things. This is what the Jewish people expected of their religious leaders. Whether it was observing a fast or interpreting the law, they expected their leaders to tell them what to do in order to stay on the "right" side of God. It is so much easier to have someone else carry the light and be the salt. They are the people who are wise and trained - right?

The scripture readings today reject this idea of a "Sunday Christian". Religion is not an insurance policy that you pay into with church attendance and special holidays with the hope of cashing in when you die. Jesus says "you" are the light and the salt. The Lord in Isaiah rejects their fasting and

asks the individual if they have shown compassion. Paul argues that compared to Christ crucified, all human wisdom is folly. All of these scriptures call us to a personal relationship with our God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is through the Spirit that we begin to understand who Jesus is and what he did for us on the cross. Through the Spirit, we begin to view the law and the prophets not as a penal code but as a guide to help us live a more abundant life. The Spirit adds light and salt to our lives. Filled with the Spirit, our lives begin to overflow with compassion for others. We begin to fast from our self-centeredness and begin to feast on love for others.

The message this week is to step away from the quick answers and walk toward a closer relationship with the One who loves you so much He gave his life for you. When we begin to view things through the Spirit of love, we begin to see things in a new light and experience the rich flavor of life God has given us. Let us carry that light and salt into a world drowning in superficial realities.