

Scripture Readings and Sermon

October 11, 2020 by Rev. Mark Brechin

Commentary on Exodus 24:12,16-18, 32:1-14

(Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

After the Lord spoke the "Ten Commandments" before the entire people, they pleaded with Moses to listen on their behalf for they were terrified. So the Lord spoke to Moses about laws concerning the altar, slaves, violence, property, restitution, annual festivals, the sabbatical year, and the promised land (20:22-23:33). After Moses shares all of this with the people, they make a blood covenant with God to obey all that had been given. It is only after this agreement (24:3-8), that Moses went by himself up the mountain to receive the tablet and instruction concerning the tabernacle to house the covenant (25-31). Moses was gone for over a month and the people began to doubt God and systematically broke the blood covenant they had made with God. It is at this point that one of the most unique passages in scripture occurs. Knowing the willfulness of the people to sin, the Lord informs Moses that he will become a new patriarch much like Abraham. Moses intercedes on the people's behalf and "the LORD changed his mind". This statement impacts not only the concept of destiny and predestination but also shows the power of righteous prayer and intercession. This role of intercession becomes a major theme in the ministry of Jesus.

Exodus 32:14 "And the LORD changed his mind"

When have you experienced the power of intercession?

When have you felt called to intercede on behalf of another?

Have we become restless like the Israelites waiting for Jesus' return?

What golden calves have we made?

Commentary on Matthew 22:1-14 *(Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))*

This third and last parable is similar to the one told in Luke 14:15-24 with some notable exceptions. While Luke states that there is simply a man who is giving a banquet. Matthew states that the man is a king and the banquet is for the arranged marriage of his son. This ties both to the previous parable with the landowner sending the son and the question of authority. It is the father who arranges the marriage, not the son so it is by the authority of the father that the son is there. In Luke, the people make excuses while in Matthew, once again following the parable of the tenants, they killed the servants and were destroyed by the king. Scholars argue this refers to the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. which is between the traditional dating from 50-100 A.D. The parable then ties into the first parable by having the outsiders invited after the refusal of the first. If the parable does refer to the Temple, then the outsiders expand beyond the prostitutes and tax collectors to include Gentiles. Matthew then adds a final scene where, while all may be invited, only those with the wedding garments (doing the will of the Father) can stay. In this context, the reference to chosen refers to those who not only accept the invitation to salvation given by grace but then follow Christ in the way of righteousness.

Matthew 22:14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

In what context have you heard this popular phrase?

Have you ever thought about it in terms of grace and responsibility?

Is being a Christian, a profession you make or the life you live?

Would it make a difference if it read, "Many are called but few choose."?

Commentary on Philippians 3:17-4:1, 4-7

(Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

Paul invites the Philippians to join him and others in pressing on toward the heavenly goal.

Those who have given up because of suffering and instead have chosen what Bonhoeffer would call "cheap grace" will ultimately find that the gift of salvation was squandered and buried under earthly things. Salvation into the kingdom of God means to act as citizens of heaven even during earthly suffering. As citizens, we should rejoice in our salvation and give thanks at all times. Paul says that we are called to treat other citizens with gentleness and respect since the Lord is near. That assurance of the presence of God gives a sense of peace that surpasses all earthly understanding.

Philippians 4:7 "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding"

Have you ever felt an overwhelming sense of peace after praying?

Does this peace last or does the world steal it away?

How does knowing that your true citizenship belongs in heaven help you find peace?

Can rejoicing, prayer, and thanksgiving really change the way you live your life?

Sermon "You Are Invited" (*[Sermon Video](#)*)

The roots of the old saying "Familiarity breeds contempt" can be found in Proverbs 25:17, "Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house, otherwise the neighbor will become weary of you and hate you". Even Jesus found this true when he tried to preach in his hometown in Mark 6:4-5, "'Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house' and he could do no deed of power there." The question is have we become too familiar with Jesus. Are we like the people in town when they are invited to the banquet and view it as a burden rather than an opportunity? If we do go to the banquet, are we upset if there is a dress code?

The main obstacle facing the chief priests and the Pharisees was their familiarity with "religion". As men who studied the law and performed the ritual, they no longer regarded the Temple or the opportunity to serve the LORD as an honor and a gift. They had worked in the vineyard so long that that thought they had a right to the grapes. They had served a merciful king so long that they forgot about the king's judgment. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom because it reminds us of just how small we are and how great is our God. When we become too comfortable with the gift of grace, we begin to shun the cross and rather seek comfort and prosperity based on our familiarity with Jesus. We ignore the invitation and the responsibility that comes with accepting that invitation.

The Israelites in the story of Exodus were dealing with the exact opposite. Their unfamiliarity with the LORD and their fear of God caused them to doubt Moses' survival on the mountain. They soon turned to familiar patterns of worship which they had only one month earlier sworn off. Before Moses went up the mountain, the people sworn a blood covenant not to worship idols or other gods. A blood covenant means that if the covenant is broken then their life is forfeit. Their fear and ignorance rather than familiarity caused them to reject a relationship with God. Moses, however, interceded on their behalf and God postponed judgment.

Whether it is because of ignorance or familiarity, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are interceding on our behalf. The doors of grace are kept open and the invitation remains for all who by faith choose to accept. Some may have strayed because of the lure of worldly idols while others simply got bore of Jesus and took their gift of grace for granted. All are called both priests and prostitutes, tax collectors and Pharisees to repentance and a renewal of faith. This is possible only through the intercession of Jesus. The invitation is waiting for us and the banquet is closer now than when we first believed. As guests, we are called to remove the rags of sin and hate to reveal the original robe that we were given (we were created good). The removal of the rags means that we embrace the cross and claim our citizenship in heaven. When the rags are finally removed, we find the burden is lifted and a peace

descend that allows us to rejoice even in the midst of suffering.

The question before us today is not why we ended up on the street or in the town but rather will we accept the invitation to leave the rags of this world and embrace the new life Christ offers.