

Scripture Readings {No Sermon}

June 23, 2019 by Rev. Mark Brechin

Commentary on 2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14 (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

After encountering God at Mt. Horeb, Elijah heads back to the land of Israel and encounters Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21). While Elisha is in the background, Elijah has his final confrontation with Ahab and Jezebel in argument over Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21). The story has some echoes of the story of David and Bathsheba. Ahab is urged by Jezebel to take what is not his and then kill to cover it up. Like David, Ahab repents while Jezebel bides her time. Because Ahab repented, God's wrath is shifted to Ahaziah (Ahab's son) who like his mother worships other gods which once again leads to a show down between Elijah and the leader of Israel (2 Kings 1). After this final show down, Elijah goes to be with God and asks Elisha to stay behind. The trip from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho and across the Jordan retraces in reverse the path the Joshua took when he led the Israelites into the promised land. By retracing the steps, the writer is drawing a similarity between Moses and Joshua with Elijah and Elisha. The insistence of Elisha on following Elijah three times is also similar to Ruth following Naomi (Ruth 1:8-16). All of these parallels are meant to point out to the reader that Elisha will become a great prophet and leader.

Commentary on Galatians 3:23-29 (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

In Galatians, Paul is dealing not with the philosophy of the Gentiles but the legalism of the Jewish followers. Despite the Jerusalem council in which it was agreed that Gentiles did not need to follow all of the kosher laws and traditions, there is still a strong argument being made that the only way to be a "good" Christian is to first be a "good" Jew in regards to the Torah. Paul, however, is writing against legalism and Jewish fundamentalism. For Paul, the sole purpose of the Torah is to reveal sin and the need for repentance. When faced with the magnitude of our sin and the great need for so much repentance, the sinner will be forced to admit that they can not save themselves and need help. It is at this point of conversion that the sinner surrenders to faith in Christ and receives justification. Once the person has accepted faith and Christ's redeeming and justifying grace, there is no need of the law. Why? Because of the person's total dependence not on their own righteousness but on the righteousness of Christ. Faith in Christ means living in Christ. Living in Christ means submitting to the will of Christ to love as we have been loved. There is no law against that love nor is there any cultural or racial distinction between that love. Jew, Greek, slave, free, male, or female all love as Christ has loved them. There is no distinction since all are the Body of Christ. The Law that drove them to repentance is no longer the focus much like an invitation is no longer needed once the person has joined the party.

Commentary on Luke 8:26-39 (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

After teaching in parables, the family of Jesus wanted to speak with him. It has been suggested that they noticed the unrest Jesus was causing among the authorities and wished to persuade him to modify his teaching. Instead Jesus claims that his "real" family are those who hear the word of God and leaves the Galilee region across the sea of Galilee to the land controlled by Gentile authorities. This is the significance of the pigs in the story today. The "tombs" served as homes for those who were diseased (lepers) or those who were mental ill with demons. Like other stories in Mark and Matthew, it is not the man but the demons who recognize the true nature of Jesus. The command to give a name shows Jesus' authority over even the demons. Legion refers not only to the number of demons but also represents a great destructive force among the Roman colonies. The fact that Jesus commands "Legion" speaks both to his spiritual but also earthly power. It is that power and the fact that Jesus

killed a primary source of income for the community that caused the people from the city to fear Jesus. Finally, the "saved" man becomes one of the first apostles (sent ones) to the Gentiles.