

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

*June 6, 2021 by Rev. Mark Brechin*

## **Commentary on 1 Samuel 8:4-20** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

After Samuel's call, the story moves directly into the consequence of Eli's sin, the loss of the ark and Eli's death (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 and 6 deal with the restoration of the ark and Samuel takes his place as the leader of Israel in Chapter 7. The people, however, begin to see the pattern of Eli's sons repeating in Samuel's sons. God may have called Samuel but Samuel's sons did not follow God and the people demanded a king. From a practical view, a king should provide more stability than hoping a righteous "judge" would appear in time to save the people. The pattern of good fathers and corrupt sons would soon be repeated in the kingship of Israel and later Judah. The importance of the request, however, is not about practicality but about the heart and spirit of the people. They no longer trusted God to take care of them. They choose the idols of human institutions over the God who had delivered them from slavery under a king in Egypt. The story challenges everyone to ask, "Who rules your heart?"

1 Samuel 8:7 "they have rejected me from being king over them."

Who or what rules your life? Sets your priorities?

Do you spend all of your time trying to please family?

How much time and effort do spend on your standing in the community and friends?

Does your employer rule your day?

Are the master of your own fate, the captain of your own soul? (Invictus)

Or have you accepted Jesus as your only Lord and king?

## **Commentary on Mark 3:20-35** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

At the same time Jesus is gathering more followers even to the point of running out of room (3:20), the scribes and even his own family are beginning to question Jesus' motives. The scribes claims that Jesus is working for evil and his family is concerned about his mental stability. Jesus responds by redefining righteousness. Doing God's will is what binds people together as family and evil cannot exist in the presence of God's will. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit can we do God's will and if we discredit those who do God's will, we are discrediting the work of the Holy Spirit. Righteousness, therefore, is grounded in God's will and not in legal or familial obedience. If we try to do God's will and submit to social pressure, will soon find that our hearts are divided and will not stand.

Mark 3:35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.

If God is your king, then what does God require?

Do you daily say "Not my will but Thine"?

How do you discern God's will for today?

Do you rely on what you learned in Sunday School or do you daily seek the Spirit?

If we are one in the Spirit and one in doing God's will than who is your family?

## **Commentary on 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Paul addressed the divisions within the new church caused by spiritual gifts, economic status, and righteousness under the law. It is within this first letter that Paul talks extensively about spiritual gifts and the unified Body of Christ. This second letter addresses a new problem within the congregation - cheap grace. Today it is called the "prosperity gospel" but this false teaching repeatedly surfaces in the church. The idea that being a Christians

means that we are somehow exempt from suffering and the hardships of life. Starting the letter by mentioning their near death (1:8-10) struggles, Paul affirms that "the sufferings of Christ abound in us" (1:5). The entire letter focuses on the simple phrase "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (12:9). In the passage today, Paul urges members not to "lose heart". Even though our physical outward bodies may be experiencing afflictions, we have a "spirit of faith" which helps us to persevere.

2 Corinthians 4:16 So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

Do you have to be young in order to serve God?

Is there an age limit or physical requirement to walk with Jesus?

If our strength comes from the Spirit, then why do we say we are too tired to serve?

Our bodies are all aging and are unable to do what they once did but is that an excuse?

What does God value more an able body or a willing heart?

Is God's grace and strength sufficient for what he is calling you to do?

### Sermon "Me, We, Thee" ([\*Sermon Video\*](#))

From the moment we are born, our focus is on our survival and self interest. As these self interests grow beyond basic physical needs to wants and desires, parents are faced with the task of balancing a happy childhood and creating a self-centered tyrant. Being part of a family, school, and community means moving from a strictly self-centered "Me" approach to a communal "We" approach to the world. When community is lost through natural growing up (college bound) or unexpected situations (death, war, ...), it is easy to retract back to "Me" in a highly competitive world. While this "Me" is challenged by marriage and children, it can sometimes expand to include only a small family unit and group of friends. Groups that once depended on a strong sense of "We" such as Rotary, Lions Club, and churches are faced with the challenge of convincing people to expand their "Me".

When God led the people out of Egypt, they were a collection of "Me" because of their condition as slaves and foreigners. The stories of Exodus, Joshua, and Judges reveal how a people and a nation were formed. They realized that they needed a unifying leader to hold the "We" together and the judges including Samuel were too unpredictable. They wanted to be like other nations but God wanted them to be more. God wanted them to move beyond the "We" to "Thee". A people and nation united by their faith and their obedience to the One God. God was their king and had formed them in the wilderness but the people were too spiritually blind to see. They choose their "We" over the "Thee" of God. They choose sight over faith and physical over spiritual. Today, even those who proclaim Jesus as their "Lord" choose human institutions over Jesus' teachings of love and forgiveness.

Jesus was constantly challenging those around him to choose "Thee" over "We". The authorities choose the "We" of their traditional interpretation of the Law while Jesus told them to seek the "Thee" of the Spirit within the Law. Talking with God is always better than reading about God. Talking with God, however, means that you may have to change the way "We" do things. Jesus was even faced with the most basic "We" structure, the family. Rather than affirming the family, Jesus said that all those who choose "Thee" (God's will) was his true family. The radical implication is that each of us is not only called to repent of our self-centered "Me" but also by faith leave behind our communities of "We" when God calls us into the kingdom of "Thee".

This radical call to repent, believe, the kingdom of God is at hand (Me, We, Thee) challenges many of the pillars of human civilization. Patriotism, family units, and community pride are all told to take a back seat to following God's will. The Puritans, Mennonites, Huguenots, and others who came to North America seeking the freedom to follow God's will made that radical choice. Choosing God does not mean bringing Christianity back into government but rather choosing God as your ultimate government, your king. Government is a human institution and so is sinful. No amount of institutionalized prayer or human laws can remove that sin any more than we can save our own soul.

Only by daily following Jesus can we find a better way of living with God and each other. We can only truly be the best version of "We" by first submitting to "Thee". It is in "Thee" that we can authentically be "We" and "Me". By hoping and relying upon the Spirit, we discover who we were created to be individually and communally. This is what Jesus was telling the people gathered and God was telling the Israelites. Only by being completely grounded in God can humanity thrive and prosper.