

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

*June 16, 2019 by Rev. Mark Brechin*

## **Commentary on 1 Kings 19:1-15a** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

Towards the end of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 11), Jeroboam was given charge by Solomon over all the forced labor. Jeroboam met the prophet Ahijah who told him that he would be given rule over ten of the twelve tribes. As a result, Jeroboam ended up in exile until Solomon died. When he returned and demanded relief from Solomon's taxes from the new king Rehoboam, he was rejected and the ten northern tribes split from Judah and Benjamin (1 Kings 12). Kings goes on to record the corrupt rule of Jeroboam's family (12-15), Baasha's family (15-16), and Omri's family (16-22) whose son was Ahab. It was during Ahab's reign the Elijah appears. The first Elijah story is about the drought sent to punish Israel (1 Kings 17). After the drought, Elijah challenged Jezebel's priests of Baal to a contest at Mount Carmel (Jezebel was Ahab's wife). Elijah not only won the contest but killed Jezebel's priests incurring the wrath of Jezebel and setting the stage for today's reading. Up to this point, Elijah had only witnessed God's awesome power over nature and God's miracles. On the mountain, Elijah learned that God was in the sheer silence at the core of all creation. God's question about why Elijah was there is a simple question of faith. Did Elijah have faith because of the miracles God did or who God is? The same question can be asked today.

## **Commentary on Romans 5:1-5** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

In Chapter 4, Paul makes an extensive argument that Abraham is not made righteous because of his obedience to the Law since there was no Law yet but was made righteous by his faith in God. It was not the law that made Abraham obedient to God's call but his faith. That same leap of faith in the resurrection of Jesus that reckons the believer justification. Justification by faith brings righteousness with God and peace through Jesus Christ. From this relationship flows grace which imparts hope to the faithful even during tribulation. When faced with tribulation, the faithful can either lose their faith or persevere in their trust. If they persevere, they will find that God has given them sufficient grace to stand strong which strengthens their righteous character. Like a callous that grows harder and stronger with every use, the person whose character finds their hope in God only grows in hope with each tribulation for God does not disappoint. The more a believer relies on faith, the more the Holy Spirit supports and encourages the believer. Faith and love is a re-enforcing loop (a re-enforcing loop is a positive relationship between variables in a chain which causes the quantities to increase with each cycle). It is important to note that if the individual lacks the faith to persevere then it could become a decaying loop where faith and hope diminish (Peter trying to walk on water).

## **Commentary on John 16:7-15** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

Jesus, in his last speech declares that the disciples will be facing the same hostility that the prophets did before the Babylonian captivity. They will be rejected and scorned but the Spirit of Truth, as in the time of the prophets, will come upon them so that they might witness. The words the Spirit gives will both encourage the believers and condemn the world. Jesus says the Spirit will convict the world: 1) of sin; 2) of righteousness; and 3) judgment. Note that this was originally the role of the Law to convict the Jews of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Sin, however, is no longer based on obedience to the Law but belief in Jesus as the Son of God. Righteousness is no longer based on one's relationship with the Temple but one's relationship with the Father through Jesus. And judgment is no longer reserved for those who are not Jewish but applies to everyone who follows the world rather than Jesus. With the gift of the Advocate, they will no longer be disciples or students but will become apostles or those sent to proclaim the Word. Just as Jesus was sent by the Father, now the apostles will

be sent by Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit becomes the conduit through which the church continues the ministry of Jesus Christ.

### **Sermon Summary** (*Youtube [Sermon Video](#)*)

The art of preaching is a balancing act between the call of scripture and the needs of the congregation set in the context of a liturgical and secular year. This Sunday, Father's Day is at the same time as Trinity Sunday which follows Pentecost that emphasizes the Holy Spirit. While the Gospel reading mentions the Father will glorify the Son and the Son will send the Advocate, the Old Testament focuses on God beyond the fire, the wind, and the earthquake. The Epistle reading from Paul then focuses on faith in the Holy Trinity which has been poured into the heart through the Holy Spirit. With all these moving parts, it is sometimes confusing where to start.

It may be helpful to think of Scripture as divided into the Old Testament, Gospel, and Epistles. The Old Testament places a mirror in front of humanity exposing all of our faults and weaknesses. This is why people often say that the Law of the Old Testament convicts us of our sin and if the Law doesn't then the Prophets will. In the Gospel, Jesus reveals to us who we are called to be as children of God. The image of a kingdom of love and forgiveness where the broken are mended calls each of us to be more than we have become. In the apostles writing in the Epistles, especially Paul in Romans and Corinthians, the difficulty of leaving the sinful nature revealed in the Old Testament to becoming a new person of the Gospel is explored.

In the readings today, Elijah expresses the doubt that at one time or another creeps into to each of our lives. Even after surviving a famine and performing the miracles of God, Elijah is still on the run and afraid for his life. In the midst of our doubts, how often have we heard, "Elijah, why are you here?". As a child, I often ran to my father when I was scared and now as a father, my children run to me. I understand the question, "Why are you here?" It is not a question that minimizes the perceived threat but rather is a question of faith. As Paul says in Romans, "If God is for us, who can stand against us?" Elijah's question reveals the doubt in all of us.

Jesus, knowing that the disciples would soon be filled with doubt after the crucifixion, told them that they would not be left alone. The Holy Spirit would guide them and they would be given the assurance of faith. Not a faith in an old system of guilt over sin, righteousness based on works, or judgment based on a standard that no one can obtain. No this is a faith in Jesus Christ who has forgiven our sin, received our judgment, and clothed us not in our own righteousness but in his righteousness. Wrapped in the arms of Jesus, we can have faith that God is with us and that we are not alone.

That does not mean, as Paul points out, that there will not be times of suffering. We live in a broken world in which the sharp edges of life often cut and wound. Being a Christian does not mean that we are protected from suffering nor does it mean that we should seek meaningless suffering. Some of the worst examples of fatherhood are those that inflict needless suffering in order to "build character". Sometimes suffering is just suffering. But if we have faith, then we know that we are not suffering alone but the Holy Spirit is with us and if the Holy Spirit is with us then we can rely on God's strength and not simply our own. The more we rely on God, the more our faith grows and the deeper our walk with God becomes which produces not only a heart for God but a strength of character and life of hope that can only be found in God.

From the question "Why are you here" to the promise of the Holy Spirit to the assurance that we are not alone, the scripture readings today demonstrate the love of a Father who loves us through His Son and whose heart is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Happy Father's Day in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.