

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

October 4, 2020 by Rev. Mark Brechin

## Commentary on Exodus 19:9, 20:1–17

(Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

After receiving water from the rock, the Israelites then had to defend the water source from the Amalekites. It is during this battle that Moses holding the staff insured victory (17:11). Following this victory, they head to the mountain of God which Moses had promised when he received his instructions at the burning bush. There Moses met with Jethro who taught both Aaron and Moses. Jethro showed Aaron how to be a priest of God (18:12) and taught Moses how to be a leader (18:21). In this way, Jethro models the role of future prophets advising the king and reminding the priests who they serve. In Chapter 19, the first part of the journey ends after three months and the teaching of the Law begins. The "Ten Commandments" or ten "words", as they are known in Hebrew, are the beginning of a much bigger covenant ceremony that begins in Chapter 19. The LORD calls Moses from the mountain and says, "Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples." The word "possession" in Hebrew means "personal property" and "obey my voice" refers to obeying the ten "words". In this context, the ten commandments have less to do with morality and more about the limitations the LORD puts on *his* people. Another way to say this is if everything belongs to the God than who we are actually stealing from is God. It is God who gives us our parents and God who brings a couple together therefore dishonoring our parents or committing adultery is a violation against God.

Exodus 20:2 "I am the LORD your God"

What does it mean to keep a Sabbath? Do you make time to be with God?

If a time traveler viewed your typical day, what idol would they say you worshiped?

Cell phone? Television? Athletic sport?

Do you buy something because you need it or do you covet it based on neighbor or ad?

Is it possible to view any media which uses sex to sell and not "lust in the heart"?

## Commentary on Matthew 21:33–46 (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

In the first parable, Jesus compares the chief priests and the Pharisees to the son who says yes but refuses to work while the prostitutes and the tax collectors are the ones who said no but later went to work. The focus is on how the two different people responded to the request of the father as a parallel to how both responded to John's call for repentance. This parable shifts from John to Jesus and actually answers the original question concerning authority. Jesus is indirectly claiming to be the son of the landowner. This son is the cornerstone rejected by the builders just as the son was rejected by the tenants. This stone or son will be the downfall of both the builders and the tenants as well as the redeemer of all who "produce the fruits of the kingdom". Jesus is claiming the authority to remove the current tenants and replace them because of his relationship to the landowner.

Matthew 21:40 "what will he do to those tenants?"

If Jesus walked into your home or work, would he find a faithful tenant?

Do we exclude Jesus from certain places and times in our lives?

What does it mean for Jesus to be the cornerstone and foundation of your life?

What is God saying to you today through this parable?

Is he still calling you?

## Commentary on Philippians 3:2-14

(Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

At the beginning of the letter, Paul referred to those who were trying to working against him while he was in prison (1:15-16) and mentions that the Philippians also have adversaries most like due to their support of Paul (1:28). Paul now turns his attention to these by first calling them "dogs" and then showing how he has more "human" authority than any of them (3:3-6). After stating his credentials, he then views them as a prideful illusion compared to what he has gained by faith in Jesus Christ. All suffering and especially suffering at the hands of those opposed to the message of Jesus should be viewed in the light of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. This resurrection with Christ makes all suffering endurable and is the goal towards which Paul strives. This goal is not achieved through pious righteousness or a one time conversion but rather by faith that is something one has to cling to everyday as the "press on" in their daily life in Christ.

Philippians 3:14 I press on toward the goal

Is Jesus my goal or is success, fame, security, or family my goal?

When we leave the world behind to follow Jesus, are we ready for the world's anger?

Is community a healthy community if it is not grounded in Jesus?

How is suffering and suffering for Christ different?

Where is God calling you to "press on toward" today?

### **Sermon "The First Sermon" ([\*Sermon Video\*](#))**

Around the world this Sunday, United Methodists will be celebrating World Communion Sunday. As our eyes turn to the cross and we remember the gift of his bread and juice, we also recall the first message Jesus proclaimed after he left the desert, "Repent, believe, the kingdom of God is at hand". We hear that same message proclaimed in the scripture readings this morning.

It does not take long after hearing about the state of the world today to realize that we need to repent. Repent simply means to change direction. Imagine a person driving down the road and heading for a canyon where the bridge is out. If that person doesn't turn, they will drive off the cliff. In so many areas, it looks like the world is heading in the wrong direction and the cliff is getting nearer. From one perspective, a person standing on the side of the road yelling that there is death ahead and turn around before it is too late sounds like judgment and wrath. From another perspective, this same person could be seen as offering grace in the form of a warning. In Matthew, Jesus is that person on the side of the road.

The message of the parable of the wicked tenants is a warning not to be like them. They rejected the landowner even after all the attempts that the landowner made to remind them of who they were and who owned the vineyard. Despite the multiple rejection, the landowner was gracious enough to even send his son. The rejection and murder of his son, however, has consequences as proclaimed not by Jesus but by the chief priests and Pharisees. Those consequences are the cliff that we are heading for if we do not repent, turn around. Jesus was both warning and pleading with them to give up their pride and not reject him as they rejected John the Baptist. For both John and Jesus were simply proclaiming the will of God. While John may have had his human failings, Jesus revealed to them the perfect will of God. The parable is a call for repentance while there is still time to repent. Repent and restore our broken relationship with God and with one another.

God called the Israelites to the holy mountain to propose to them. God would make them a holy people and a chosen nation among nations if they choose God as their one and only God. Just like a wedding, the bride and groom are asked if they are actually willing to forsake all others and commit to live in a relationship with one another. The "Ten Commandments" are the terms of the marriage between God

and the Israelites. These terms include what it means to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (No other gods, no idols, no misrepresentation of the name of God, and give one day a week to be with God). In order that children might learn to honor their parents, the parents are called to be content with what God has given them (no lying, no coveting which leads to stealing and adultery, and no murdering). The terms God gives are basic practices needed in order to maintain a somewhat healthy relationship with God and with each other. When we repent, we are called back into this life giving and life affirming relationship. There are people and systems in this world, however, that do not want us to be healthy.

The world appears at times to thrive on conflict. As the old newspaper saying goes, "If it bleeds, it leads". It is a symptom of our own brokenness and sin that destructive behavior getting the most attention in our society. When we turn from this brokenness and begin to restore our relationship with God, there are always those who want us to go back to the way we "used to be". Even Paul and the Philippians faced resistance to the new found freedom and grace they found in Jesus Christ. Some wanted them to be more Roman while others wanted them to be more Jewish and follow circumcision. In the face of this opposition, Paul urges the Philippians and us to press onward toward that healthy relationship with God in Jesus Christ. It is by faith we were saved and that same faith will be sufficient to overcome any obstacles. For as Paul says in Romans, there is nothing in all of creation physical or spiritual that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. If we repent and believe, we will find that the kingdom of God is at hand. For God gave his only son so that all would be saved through his body and his blood. Pray for the world on this World Communion Sunday.