

Scripture Readings and Sermon

August 23, 2020 by Rev. Mark Brechin

Commentary on Genesis 47:27-30, 48:21, 50:22, 24 Exodus 1:6-14 (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

The reading selection has once again been both expanded and shortened to cover scripture that is often overlooked in the lectionary. The original text is Exodus 1:8-2:10 which includes the birth and adoption of Moses made famous by the movies "The Ten Commandments" and "The Prince of Egypt". The text from Genesis which includes a saying by Jacob and Joseph about the promised restoration of the people back to the promised land. These promises are foundational to the Exodus story including the birth of Moses. It is interesting to note the difference between Jacob and Joseph. Jacob (Israel) tells Joseph that "God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your ancestors." (48:21) This statement implies that Jacob expected Joseph to return and not settle in Egypt. If this had happened, there would be no need for the people to be delivered from slavery. At the time of Joseph's death, Joseph says that "God will surely come to you, and bring you out" (50:24) Rather than taking the initiative and returning to the promised land, Joseph encourages the people to wait for a deliverer appointed by God. This sets the stage for Moses. It is during this wait that the people forget about the promised land and fall into slavery when a "new king" comes to power.

Exodus 1:8 "a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph"

How has your view of change developed throughout your life?

Can you see how both Jacob and Joseph are trying to hold on to what they know,
one by wanting to go back and the other by wanting to stay?

Does a fear of change sometimes keep you from following God? When has that fear
put you in a worse position than when you started?

When has change been forced upon you ("a new king") and how has God been with
during the change?

Commentary on Matthew 16:1-4, 13-20 (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

The lectionary reading was expanded to include the demand for a sign from the Pharisees and the Sadducees. After the Canaanite woman, there are two more stories of healings and miracle feedings. The demand for a sign provides the impetus for Jesus' question, "who do you say that I am?" Unlike the authorities, the disciples have seen multiply signs which included healing, feeding, and walking on water. This last experience may explain Peter's answer. It was during this experience that the Lordship of Jesus is revealed by the Father to Peter. While the disciples saw these signs and came to believe, the leaders like doubting Thomas want to see the signs for themselves. The contrast between the leaders and the disciples asks the old question, "Is seeing believing or is believing seeing". Did the disciples believe because they saw or did they truly see because they first believed? Jesus seems to be saying to Peter that it is God the Father who opens the eyes of the believer. For those who have their eyes closed even the sign of Jonah (the resurrection) will not be enough to see who Jesus truly is.

Matthew 16:15 "But who do you say that I am?"

When did Jesus for you stop being a character in the Bible and start being a very real
presence?

How has the Jesus of your mind changed as you have experience life with him?

Have you felt the compassionate heart of Jesus when world around you seemed
heartless?

Have you felt the strong hand of Jesus when temptation was at your doorstep?
Do you find that Jesus seems to always be asking, "But who do you say that I am?"

Commentary on Romans 12:1–8 (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

After addressing God's plan for the Jewish people who have rejected Jesus as their Messiah, Paul turns to the community of believers. If they are, as Paul states, simply wild olive branches grafted on by faith alone, then how should they act to be worthy of the rich tradition that they have been grafted onto. With the end of the sacrificial system both on the cross and exclusion from and later destruction of the Temple, the believers are to present their lives as a living sacrifice. This sacrifice is made acceptable through faith in Jesus and submission of will to God's will. With the heart and mind aligned with God, the Holy Spirit then provides unique gifts and graces fitting for the individual to be used for the community. The unselfish use of these gifts for the benefit of the community according to God's will is Paul's understanding of a living sacrifice.

Romans 12:2 "Do not be conformed to this world"

How does the world's message conflict with Paul's understanding of community?

Do we view our "God given gifts" as simply for our benefit and means of income?

How does the world view those who unselfishly use their gifts even when the use of those gifts may prove dangerous or "a waste"?

Have you ever heard, "They could have really done something if they hadn't wasted their talent on"?

How does focusing your mind on God change how you view gifts and community?

Sermon "Lord of My Life" (*[Sermon Video](#)*)

What does it mean to say that Jesus is your Lord? When Peter proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, he was making a statement of faith. In the Gospel of John, Peter puts it this way "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68-69) It is upon this statement of faith that Jesus is the "Son of the living God, "the Holy One of God" that Christianity is founded. While we may have differing rituals, understanding of church authority, and emphasizes different aspects of God, all Christians join with Peter in proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

While Peter's heart was in the right place, he and the disciples did not fully grasp what it meant to be *the* Messiah. That understanding would only come after the resurrection and through the Holy Spirit when their minds were opened. Once he understood, Peter proclaimed the message of faith which is the key to heaven for we are saved by faith alone. While some denied his message at Pentecost and remained bound to their sin and brokenness, others received the good news by faith and found the chains of sin loosed and the healing power of forgiveness in Jesus the Messiah. With the keys of faith and the power of the good news, the Christian church has continued to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God who breaks the power of sin and restores creation back to its Creator through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is continually challenging us to open our minds to the teachings of Christ and open our hearts to the grace of God so that God's will may be done in our life and in our world. This work can only occur when we give our lives by faith as a living sacrifice to God. By giving our life to God, we find the life we were designed to live. Our gifts and grace reach their full potential in the Body of Christ. No one is excluded and no part is small for everyone is part of God's plan. The first step is joining with Peter and having faith that Jesus is the Holy One of God. Faith, however, is only the first of many steps on this journey. Christians are known as followers of Jesus and not just observers.

The descendants of Abraham were a nomadic people who followed God to the promised land. The land and the promise of blessings were tied together for it was when they were set apart that they learned to rely solely upon God. When a famine came, God led them through Joseph to Egypt to find food. After the famine, however, the people forgot to follow and so eventually became slaves. Just as Joseph's decision to give God the vengeance led to reconciliation and salvation from famine, Joseph's decision to stay in Egypt and wait for God to make the first move led the people into suffering. Being a living sacrifice means continually seeking and following God even when life becomes comfortable. Proclaiming that Jesus is your Messiah means that he leads and we follow. There may be times when we are called to Egypt and other times when we are called to desert. As John Wesley puts it in his covenant prayer, "Lord, make me what you will. I put myself fully into your hands: put me to doing, put me to suffering, let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and with a willing heart give it all to your pleasure and disposal. Christ will be the Savior of none but his servants. He is the source of all salvation to those who obey. Christ will have no servants except by consent to all that he requires. Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing."

By faith, we proclaim who Jesus is through our words and through our actions. As living sacrifices ready to go or stay, we become part of God's plan of salvation offering the good news to all. May our lives reflect the profession of our lips. Amen.