

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

July 7, 2019 by Rev. Mark Brechin

## **Commentary on 2 Kings 5:1-14** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

The miracles of Elisha to some degree foreshadow the miracles that Jesus will perform. Elisha will turn bad water into good (2 Kings 2:19-22). He will bless a jar of oil that will multiply into enough to pay for a family out of debt (2 Kings 4:1-7). He will heal a dead boy (2 Kings 4:18-37). And he will feed over a hundred with food left over (2 Kings 4:38-44). Because of these miracles and his prophecy that helped Israel and Judah defeat the Moabites (2 Kings 3), both the slave girl and the King of Israel knew of Elisha. Like Jesus, it is not the King of Israel who seeks healing but a Gentile much like the Roman Centurion (Matthew 8). Unlike the Centurion who has faith, Naaman is insulted when he is told to wash 25 miles away in the Jordan. It is not his faith but the faith of the servants that result in healing. As a result, the power in this story lies not with Naaman, the King of Israel, or even Elisha but with the young slave girl and the servants who humbly witness to their faith in God.

## **Commentary on Galatians 5:1, 13-25** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

Similar to Plato's analogy of the cave, for Paul humanity is shackled to the floor by sin. It is so dark in the cave, however, most people are unaware of the shackles often made of fleshly desires (see verse 19-21). The Law reveals the shackles but does nothing to break them. Thus the Law removes ignorance only to replace it with the yoke of slavery. Christ, however, breaks the shackles of sin and gives us true freedom. To many, however, have become comfortable in the cave and self-indulge in their flesh rather than live in the Spirit. Paul is calling the Galatians to leave the cave and walk in the Spirit of light which is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." We are freed from sin and for love. To try and love without freedom results in idolatry and lust. To be free but fail to love is self-indulgence and a selfish rejection of Christ. If we are free but have not love for ourselves and others, than we are still far from God.

## **Commentary on Luke 10:1-11, 16-20** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

The appointing of seventy could be a reference to the seventy Gentile nations described in Genesis 10 after the flood. (Nations of Japheth = 14, nations of Ham = 30, and nations of Shem = 26) Jesus sends them in pairs not only for safety but more importantly because of the requirement of two witnesses. The reference to the places "he himself intended to go" is not only relevant for the immediate text but foreshadows Jesus' command to go into all of the nations before his return. Just as Jesus is the Lamb of God, the seventy are lambs in the midst of wolves. And just as Jesus must fully trust the Father even at Gethsemane, the seventy must rely completely upon God. The message of "Peace" is the same message Jesus will give them in the Upper Room after his resurrection. Their proclamation, interestingly enough, is not about the rabbi Jesus but the Kingdom of God which Jesus makes possible. A rejection of this message is a rejection of Jesus. As a result of this mission, Jesus says that he witnessed "Satan fall from heaven" (Isaiah 14:12) and "authority to tread on snakes and scorpions" (Psalm 91:13). Jesus warns them, however, not to place their hope in miracles but in the assurance that they are written in heaven. It is in God alone and not earthly miracles that salvation comes.

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

Freedom is a theme that runs deeply throughout the Scriptures. God gave humanity the freedom of choice. The freedom Adam and Eve had to choose the forbidden fruit and the freedom Abram had to choose to follow God into a promised land. Sometimes, however, those choice led not to

more freedom as the Israelites found in Egypt. When humanity uses their freedom to choose false idols and fleshy distractions rather than God, they fall into the slavery of sin. This slavery of guilt, illusion of power, and addiction is just as binding as the slavery felt by Israel under Pharaoh.

In both cases, God has sent us a deliverer. For the Israelites, it was Moses who gave God's message of freedom. For us, it is God himself in Jesus Christ who offers us freedom. When the Israelites were free from Egypt, God gave them the Law to prevent them from misusing their freedom and turning back toward sin. Like a blind person in the city trying to follow GPS from a phone, even though the instructions are clear, the person soon becomes confused and lost. The Law that was meant to keep the people free, itself became a source of slavery called legalism. When God came as Jesus, he not only clarified the instructions (GPS 2.0) but left us the Holy Spirit who would guide us on the path of freedom found in love.

Paul not only tells us to embrace our freedom in the Spirit but also tells us that we are to use our freedom to help others to find the true freedom God offers. This is what the Hebrew slave girl and the servants did for Naaman in the story told in 2 Kings. It wasn't the wealth of the Kings of Israel or Aram that healed Naaman nor was it the power and prestige of Elisha or Naaman. It was the faithful witness of two servants that led Naaman to the freedom he found in his healing. When Jesus looked out upon the world, he told the disciples that the world was filled with Naamans like a field is filled with wheat ripe for the harvest. The only problem is who will show them what true freedom looks like?

Our freedom in Christ is not only a gift but a responsibility. Just as Ronald Reagan quoted James Winthrop concerning our democracy, we too are a city shining upon a hill. It is our witness to the freedom we have found in Christ that will lead people to safe harbor or leave them in the dark. If Christians witness by their actions the false gods of power, prestige, and legalism, then the Naamans of this world will never find healing and the crop will rot in the field. Let us, as Paul says, not turn back to the values of society in the flesh but follow the Spirit's example in Love as Christ has loved us.