

Scripture Readings and Sermon

August 4, 2019 by Rev. Mark Brechin

Commentary on Hosea 14:1-7 (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

Prophets often call for repentance but what form should that repentance take? In this final chapter of Hosea, Hosea lays out a prayer of repentance (2-3) and God's response (4-7). The prayer begins with "Take away all iniquity". Since nothing sinful can come before God, iniquities must first be taken away before they can petition God in prayer and be received "graciously". The prophets have made it clear that outward animal sacrifices are not as important as a contrite heart. Therefore, the people are to offer sacrifices with their lips - confession. They will no longer look to the strength of others (Assyrians) for their salvation. They will depend on God alone for their strength and salvation. In response, God promises to heal their iniquities (backsliding) and show mercy rather than anger. If they will truly trust in God alone, then God will cause them to prosper.

Commentary on Colossians 3:1-11 (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

In 2:12, Paul argues that the Christian is buried with Christ in baptism and raised with him through faith. Therefore if we are dead in Christ then we are no longer slaves to human rituals and traditions (2:20-23). Rather than focusing on things of the world which we have died to, Paul argues in chapter 3 that we should turn our attention to the spiritual world we have been raised into through Christ. Our life is now in the risen Christ who sits at the right hand of the Father. Our actions should reflect this new spiritual reality. The desires of the flesh (v. 5) should be buried with Jesus and our life should be reoriented towards God. The ways of the temporal world which focuses on the self should be buried with the "old" person. The "new" born again Christian is one in Christ and through Christ one with all Christians. Focus on the needs and desires of the self have been replaced with concern and compassion for the entire Body of Christ on earth. It is Christ that binds us together in a common love that transcends all worldly divisions.

Commentary on Luke 12:13-21 (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

After Luke concludes his focus on prayer as a loving relationship with God, his attention turns to Jesus' ministry with those who are possessed. The casting out of demons brings swift condemnation by the authorities not because of what he did but because of the authority he used to do it. This begins a new theme which focuses on the difference between the material and the spiritual. After dismissing the crowd's demands for outward signs and the authorities outward cleanliness but inward wickedness, Jesus is asked to settle an inheritance dispute. After condemning the lawyers, the crowd now seeks Jesus' ruling on the Law. In response, Jesus tells the parable of the "Rich Fool" which once again shines a light on the difference between the material and the spiritual. All that is material is temporal and will come to an end. God, however, is everlasting and has prepared for us a spiritual home. Our priorities should reflect this foundational reality. Our devotion should be for the eternal things not for the temporal. People are rarely praised at funerals for how much money they made rather they are remembered for how much goodness and love they showed. This is the spiritual reality Jesus is pointing towards.

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

While it is often difficult during "ordinary time" in the church calendar to find a "golden thread" that ties all the scriptures together, this Sunday was relatively easy. What ties these readings together is the reminder to keep "first things first". If you forget that God is your priority, your life will begin to unravel and you will find that you have run out of time.

After questioning Jesus' authority and claiming that he came from "Beelzebul" (11:15), Jesus

calls them "fools" (11:40) and "hypocrites" (12:1). It is not surprising that the people now turn to Jesus to rule on such things as an inheritance. One can almost feel the frustration as Jesus responds that he is not judge over earthly matters. The parable that Jesus tells is about a man who focused on earthly things and forgot about those things which are eternal. The authorities were fools not because of their earthly judgments but because they were more concerned about material things than spiritual things. Like the "rich" fool, the people and the authorities had forgotten their priorities. The parable is not a condemnation of wealth but a rejection of the people who put material wealth over spiritual health.

Paul reminds the Colossians that they have been given a second chance and a new life in Christ. He warned them not to slide back into focusing on physical gratification which is idolatry or wrathful behavior which is more befitting of wounded animals. As Christians, we are to put our minds on Christ making God our first priority. By seeking God's will as Jesus did in his life, the rest of our priorities will fall into place. As we grow in the love of God, we begin to realize how precious our relationships are and how quickly they can pass. It is the memories we make with each other that keep us comforted as time passes. And it is the opportunities we missed to make those memories and not the missed opportunities to make money that we regret the most. By keeping our mind on Christ, we find that we live life more abundantly.

It is never too late to change our priorities as long as we have breath. Hosea reminded the Israelites that if they would stop relying on everyone else and began relying on God alone, then God would forgive them and restore them. Even after everything they had done, God still reached out a hand of mercy. By waiting, we do not hurt God but ourselves. By living out of a false sense of priorities, we miss the beauty of life and we are lesser for it no matter how much material wealth we have acquired. When we "Fully Rely On God" (F.R.O.G), we find a deeper fullness in life and in our relationships with one another.