

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

*October 13, 2019 by Rev. Mark Brechin*

## **Commentary on Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

As recorded in 2 Kings 24 and 25, the exile of Jerusalem to Babylon took place in two stages. When Jehoiachin rebelled against the Babylonian rule in 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar looted the Temple and took the king, the soldiers, and the craftsmen back to Babylon. The poor were left as a vassal state under the rule of Zedekiah. In 586 BC, Jerusalem finally was destroyed after a two year siege and anyone or anything of value was taken back to Babylon. The "words of the letter ... sent from Jerusalem" is meant for the first group of exiles. The message of Jeremiah is radical given the insistence upon cultural "purity" when Israel entered the promise land after the Exodus. Taking wives and building houses indicates an integration in Babylonian society. This integration, however, did not extend to their religious practices which solidified during the captivity. It was in captivity that much of the oral tradition was written down. While many would return to Jerusalem, an estimated population during the time of Jesus ranges from 800,000 to 1.2 million. Jerusalem remained the heart of Jewish legal and religious teaching but Babylon proved a fertile ground for the Jewish people to enter into to trade along the silk road from Rome to China. This would prove a vital profession as Jews were forced into Europe during later Muslim expansion. Through Jeremiah's message, God provided for their future.

## **Commentary on 2 Timothy 2:8-15** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

Paul urges Timothy in the beginning of Chapter 2 to persevere as "a good soldier", an "athlete", and a "hardworking farmer". All of these must continue their task until the war is won, the prize is obtained, and the crop is harvested. What is this task? Timothy's task is the proclamation of the gospel which Paul has passed on to him. In 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul says that he proclaims Christ and Christ crucified. But what is the crucifixion without the saving message of the resurrection. Those who by faith have excepted this message are the "elect" or chosen. Denominations disagree over this interpretation, but for John Wesley God "elected" all when Jesus was raised (John 3:16). The question is not who has been invited into a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ but who has accepted the invitation. For those who have accepted, Jesus died so they might live. This is the good news that we must not be ashamed of but boldly proclaim.

## **Commentary on Luke 17:11-19** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

As a response to the apostle's request for an "increase of faith", Luke tells the story of the ten lepers. Faith is remembering who saves us and who heals us. The nine lepers did as Jesus had told them. They were simply following not only the law which requires them to present themselves to the priests but were also doing what Jesus told them. Their obedience, however, is did not make them truly whole. It was only the one who remembered to praise God that was fully restored. Like the story of , the faithful centurion (Luke 7:9) and the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:28), the one who demonstrated true faith was a "foreigner". Only someone who was not obsessed with being legally pure took the time to remember who wrote the law in the first place. Faithfulness has more to do with relationship with the living God than obedience to the written word.