

## eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, November 8, 2009

A Ministry of Christ the Redeemer Church, San Marcos, Texas

### **ATTITUDE: Tell me something else you THINK you control**

*This discussion is the opinion of Bert Cobb and is not necessarily the opinion of anyone else. Do not interpret these reflections to mean anything other than what Bert Cobb thinks and feels. They are for the exhortation, encouragement, and edification of the Saints and may be used freely for that purpose.*

#### The Lectionary Readings for the week:

Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17

Psalm 127

Hebrews 9:24-28

Mark 12:38-44

I wish that every reader could come to class and hear the wonderful comments from the members each week. I praise God for the spiritual growth that I witness happening before my very eyes each week as the members, often for the first time, actually examine the scriptures. We search the scriptures for strength, encouragement and understanding that will “get us through the week”. The study “before Advent” each year is a gracious opportunity to change our attitudes and prepare our hearts for the Season of Advent (advent means “coming”) when the Spirit of God’s presence in our hearts and lives is renewed. Recorded Scripture could be likened to a “roadmap” showing us how to return to the presence of God. Each “traveler” is at a different location on the “map” but, all are journeying to our eventual destination: God’s presence. Some “speed” along their journey without many roadblocks or stumbles while, others of us, have to take two steps forward and one step back. We “get lost” or “venture from the path” because of the egotistical lure of “I can do this by myself”. Our eventual destination is set. All that remains is to “stay on the path” and keep “marching on to Zion”. Some, along our way, will cheer us on and some will try anything to prevent our progression on our journey. Many will stand between us and God with silly “rules” and “tests”. Honor those who are helpful and ignore the nay-sayers and “stumbling blocks”. Keep on keeping on. Persistence to excellence is a virtue few possess. God has promised to be there and “findable” IF we continually seek Him. May God speed our journey back into an understanding of what it means to be “in HIS presence”. I’m pressing on toward “HIGHER GROUND”. Won’t you join me on my journey? Lord, hear our prayers. This week’s scriptures are about how others have struggled to “find God” or to “control” their destinies.

#### **Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17**

***Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor;***

**but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do." She said to her, "All that you tell me I will do."**

**So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the LORD made her conceive, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.**

Did Ruth "want" to be in the lineage of the Messiah? What was she seeking? She was seeking "security" in the bed and arms of her kinsman, Boaz. The secret to success in life is often "doing the next thing". Naomi and Ruth were destitute in the "Promised Land". Ruth was a young widow without any "visible means of support". She "finagled" her way into the bed and life of Boaz. Boaz got a good wife, Naomi got to nurse her grandson and Ruth became part of the lineage of Jesus who would save us all. Little things, little decisions in life, MAY lead us where we never meant to go. Stay on the path. Trust God. After all, YOU and I are NOT IN CHARGE of anything. To think we are is to deny history and reality. The only things we can control are our attitudes and our relationship with the Father. FAITH is staying on the "path" when we cannot see the "end" that is planned for us. If we knew the "end", it would not be FAITH. Faith and a sense of humor have made the "journey" possible for many. Tell me something else you THINK you control.

## **Psalm 127**

1

**Unless the LORD builds the house, \*  
their labor is in vain who build it.**

2

***Unless the LORD watches over the city, \*  
in vain the watchman keeps his vigil.***

3

***It is in vain that you rise so early and go to bed so late; \*  
vain, too, to eat the bread of toil,  
for he gives to his beloved sleep.***

4

**Children are a heritage from the LORD, \*  
and the fruit of the womb is a gift.**

5

2

**Like arrows in the hand of a warrior \*  
are the children of one's youth.**

6

**Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them! \*  
he shall not be put to shame  
when he contends with his enemies in the gate.**

“A camel is a horse designed by a committee.” Jesus has said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for, my yoke is EASY and my burden is LIGHT.” “Unless the LORD builds the house, their labor is in vain who build it.” What do these scriptures mean to you? Planning is important but FAITH is MORE important in the big picture of our lives. Some have said that this psalm is a plea for “large families” because children are like “arrows in a quiver”, capable of defending their “father”. Has that been your experience? Was the psalmist really talking about “birth children”? Did you actually “plan” how many kids you might conceive? Did you work with “Planned Parenthood”? IF we believe that God is in control of our lives, then, EVERY child is a blessing. People have spent fortunes treating “infertility”. What about the “child” who is rebellious, contentious, an embarrassment, or a criminal? Are they a “blessing”? Perhaps God gave them to us to teach us patience? Peace comes when we realize that GOD is in CONTROL of their lives and NOT YOU AND ME. Someone once asked me, “How do you learn to pray?” My reply was, “Have children and, believe me, you WILL learn to pray.” Things seldom “turn out” like we planned. Things ALWAYS turn out the way God planned. Everyone is a child of someone. ALL of us are “Children of God”. Everyone is the “parent” of someone. Everyone has something they can “teach” to someone. WE have a FATHER in Heaven who loves us more than any earthly parent. Do we take advantage of this special “relationship” or, do we feel like a “motherless child” unnecessarily? IF you don’t have biological “children”, there are LOTS of children out there who need someone to love them. “Adopt” them formally or informally. “Being there” is just as important as “giving them things”. Shared love is the greatest love we possess. Only giving money does not absolve us of responsibility. We must fill their bellies AND their lives with love. Being a “parent” to orphans and the “fatherless” is part of why you and I were placed here. We have to learn to “grow where we are planted”. LOOK AROUND. Those who need your “parenting” are everywhere. YOU have something that someone else desperately NEEDS: LOVE. Who knows, you and I may be the “parents” that God planned for them. WE are in control of our attitudes toward “children”, the “orphan” and the “widow”. Tell me something else you THINK you control.

### **Hebrews 9:24-28**

***Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the***

***high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.***

So, you have your life all “planned out”? God had the life of Christ “all planned out”? I do not fully understand the “mystery of God’s love” despite my many attempts. I guess that’s why it is a “mystery”? Why would the Creator of everything CARE about ME? Why would God give up his ONLY SON, his precious child, to sacrifice himself for me? The Season of Advent is upon us. Advent is all about the “coming” (return?) of the Christ Child that we celebrate as “Christ Mass” (later changed to “Christmas”). Historically and climatologically we KNOW that Christ could not have been born December 25<sup>th</sup>. The important issue is our “attitude” toward the birth of Christ regardless of the “date” on the calendar. The imagery of “prepare ye the way of the Lord”, the “purpose” for Advent, is seldom understood by modern peoples. In the days of the Bible, the roads were full of potholes, stumbling blocks and bandits. Crews of men were dispatched to precede a dignitary to “prepare the way” by filling holes, removing barriers and bandits. Are we “preparing the way of the Lord” in our study of Advent? Are we “removing” any “barriers” to our understanding? Are we “removing” anyone who would “steal” the JOY of Advent from our lives? Are we studying to understand the “gift” of the Messiah commemorated by the celebration of “Christmas”? Can we fully grasp that Advent celebrates the fulfillment of God’s PROMISE to REDEEM the world through God’s sacrifice of His ONLY SON? Yes, WE need to put Christ back into Christmas. No, we cannot “get Christ back into Christmas” in the secular world. The real problem is that WE don’t have Christ in us. The purpose of Advent is to return the Spirit of God back into OUR hearts and lives. This passage from Hebrews is about WHY we should celebrate the COMING of Christ into our lives and hearts. For some of us, this “coming” will mark the FIRST time that the Spirit of God will enter our lives. For others, it will be a “renewal” of an old acquaintance, an acknowledgement of an old “friendship.” We can’t control the rest of the world or its attitude toward Christ but, WE can control OUR attitude toward Christ’s “coming” afresh into our hearts. The world is waiting for Christ to return. Are we? Tell me something else you THINK you control.

### **Mark 12:38-44**

***Teaching in the temple, Jesus said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."***

***He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."***

Attitude is everything in God's world. The "widow" gave OUT OF HER POVERTY and was praised because her attitude was that she relied upon God. She acknowledged that her life and livelihood were in God's CONTROL, not hers. She is the "comparison" to the scribes who THOUGHT they were in control of their lives. They were "all talk, no cattle". The scribes were condemned for their "attitudes". Do we realize and acknowledge that WE control nothing? Do we rely upon the love of God or do we beat ourselves up and work ourselves to death trying to "gain" something? Do we seek fame, wealth, reputation or "happiness"? Christ has given us the parameters for happiness: "Fear God and keep HIS commandments AND LOVE your neighbor as yourself." Nowhere in that charge do I read "get rich", "make a name for yourself" or many of the things for which we strive to attain "happiness". Many of the unhappiest people I know "possess" great wealth. Their happiness depends on their bank account levels or their stock market account levels. Is that what determines OUR happiness? I used to say, "There are no pockets in shrouds or bumper hitches on hearses" until the undertakers moved into my building. THEY bought Suburbans, with trailer hitches, mainly for resale values after they become "well-used". Most people today ARE buried in clothes WITH pockets so I guess that old adage is no longer applicable to modern times. The "amount" we put into the collection plate is not as important as the "attitude" with which we give. OUR ATTITUDE is under our control but, little else is under our control. Tell me something else you THINK you control. Advent is about changing our attitudes. Advent is about understanding that God loves us so much that he gave up His only SON to come and live among us, suffer human life and then to return to the Father having taught us the Will of the Father. Will we allow God and the Advent Season to change our attitudes? Will we receive anew the Spirit of God into our lives? Advent is coming. Let us prepare the way of the Lord to dwell anew in our hearts and lives. This is in our control IF we change our attitudes into longing for a renewal of our relationship with God. "Create in me, O Lord, a NEW HEART." ATTITUDE: Tell me something else you THINK you control.