

## eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, July 26, 2009

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

### **Truth or consequences**

*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:

2 Samuel 11:1-15

Psalm 14

Ephesians 3:14-21

John 6:1-21

Some readers may remember the TV show "Truth or Consequences" with the host, Bob Barker. (They even named a town in New Mexico for the show.) Life is much more like Truth or Consequences than it is like "The Brady Bunch" or "My Three Sons". Frankly, my life is more like TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES than any fictional TV series. Truth is as variable as the understanding of those who seek after it. The questions remain the same but, the answers keep changing. The only important immutable truth is "God loves me". Life is often spent trying to prove or disprove this "truth". It is not a new quandary for humanity. If God is truth, we spend our existence in an attempt to ascertain ultimate "truth" as a pathway to the Creator. This is not new to many of the readers as we have discussed this chain of thought in past discussions. This is but another "link" in that chain. I hope you are seeing the chain become a continuum that sustains us as we stumble through life groping for "the truth". The problem is: will I recognize "truth" when I see it? I press on searching and I hope you will travel with me.

### **2 Samuel 11:1-15**

***In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.***

***It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."***

***So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah went out of the king's***

**house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die."**

"Idle hands are the Devil's workshop." Weather has determined the outcome of more wars and more funerals than any other factor. "The turnout at one's funeral will be most affected by the weather." Spring was the time when large battles were fought because of good weather and the crops had been planted so "man-power" was more plentiful. Prior to being anointed King of Israel, David would have been in the field with his armies leading them against the appointed "foe of the season". David grew complacent and tired so he stayed home. Did David seek out Bathsheba and plan to commit adultery? David was walking on the roof of the palace during the cool of the evening when he spied a naked woman bathing. Was Bathsheba trying to catch the eye of David? Rainwater was caught in cisterns on the roofs of homes so any washing or bathing naturally occurred there. "Lead plumbing" existed as perfected by the Romans but was VERY expensive and not readily available. Our word "plumber" comes from the Latin, *plumbus* meaning, "lead". Temptation enters the unoccupied mind. The "viewing" of the bathing Bathsheba would have remained innocent enough until David inquired as to "who's the naked beauty on that there roof?" Bathsheba answered the call (was she the first "call girl"?) and had sex with David. As a result, she became pregnant. The Bible is a book of facts and opinions which is why we see ourselves mirrored in its pages. When have I been tempted when my mind was "idle"? David's sin was compounded when he attempted to hide his infidelity by having the husband, Uriah, sleep with Bathsheba so he would be the assumed "father". Uriah was more honorable than David and refused to leave his men and sleep with his wife so David made "other plans". David orchestrated the murder of Uriah by enlisting the complicity of his field commander, Joab. What do you think Joab thought when he received the enigmatic letter from King David to allow Uriah to be killed? A mind not on the business of his army in the field led to idleness, Idleness led to lust, lust led to adultery, adultery led to murder and a cover-up of the murder. Who are you in

this story? Have I repeated the chain of lies that David illustrates? What lesson can we learn from David's story? One lie or sin leads to another and another until some innocent suffers. If David had confessed his sin to Uriah, could he have stopped the eventual outcome? The child David and Bathsheba conceived died soon after birth. The parable of the mustard seed tells of how little things can lead to great things. Is the same true of evil things? It is a vivid example of "truth or consequences".

## **Psalm 14**

1

**The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." \***  
**All are corrupt and commit abominable acts;**  
**there is none who does any good.**

2

**The LORD looks down from heaven upon us all, \***  
**to see if there is any who is wise,**  
**if there is one who seeks after God.**

3

**Every one has proved faithless;**  
**all alike have turned bad; \***  
**there is none who does good; no, not one.**

4

**Have they no knowledge, all those evildoers \***  
**who eat up my people like bread**  
**and do not call upon the LORD?**

5

**See how they tremble with fear, \***  
**because God is in the company of the righteous.**

6

**Their aim is to confound the plans of the afflicted, \***  
**but the LORD is their refuge.**

7

**Oh, that Israel's deliverance would come out of Zion! \***  
**when the LORD restores the fortunes of his people,**  
**Jacob will rejoice and Israel be glad.**

"Unrequited love" is one thing. More hurtful is "unrepentant guilt". David was feeling "lower than a snake's navel in a wagon rut" when he wrote this psalm. It drips with guilt and remorse. David stole Bathsheba from her husband as an act of pure lust. Then, to compound the sin, he got the husband, Uriah the Hittite, killed once he would not cooperate with David's plans to cover up the pregnancy. It has been my experience that one lie often leads to a greater lie in a vain attempt to cover the initial untruth. Has that been your experience? Lies tend to "snow-ball" and gather in ever-increasing complexity and strength. The ultimate "lie" doesn't have "a snowball's chance in Hell" of being successful. Can I learn

from David's mistakes? Richard Millhouse Nixon would have finished his term as President of the United States if he had confessed to the minor break-in at Watergate? The lies of the cover-up cost him greatly and damaged the office of the Presidency. What can I learn about myself from these stories? Is there such a thing as a "white lie"? Does God "forgive" untruth told for a "kind reason"? An Aggie was asked to dance with the President's wife. He asked his friend what he should say while dancing with the rather "large" lady. While dancing, the answer came to him: "You sure don't sweat much for a fat woman." The truth can sometimes be as injurious as a lie. The attitude of the person telling the truth or the lie is the key. We can hire people to lie to us all day long. It is the rare person who will risk their job to tell the boss the truth. Michael Jackson and Elvis come to mind. What about David? What about you and me? Do we surround ourselves with people who will not tell us the truth BECAUSE they care more about our well-being than their employment or our friendship? What about God? Will God show me the "truth" even though it may damage my ego and hurt my "image of myself"? The "truth" does not have to be "hurtful" if we trust the love and concern of the one who tells us the truth. Sadly, those who tell the bald-faced truth often occupy the ranks of the unpopular and the unemployed. Is it really "better" to be unpopular and right than popular and a liar"? Nathan learned this with David. John the Baptist learned this with Herod. Who have you lost as a friend because you told them the "truth"? Can the "truth" be "sugar-coated"? The hard part is to see the "truth" from the other person's perspective, isn't it? "Truth" can have many shades and facets of understanding. Truth may be "tempered" with love and still be effective in its telling. Just be sure it is the "truth" that one is "telling". In my opinion, telling the "truth" as gossip has killed more lives and reputations than have lies told to support the reprobates. Telling both "the truth" and "lies" has consequences.

### **Ephesians 3:14-21**

***I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.***

***Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.***

Paul's prayer for his "children" was that their minds would neither be "idle" nor "empty". He prayed that they might be consumed with thoughts of God's love and that the Holy Spirit would center their minds so that they might be able to comprehend the "breadth and length and height and depth" of the love of Christ that would overcome the human mind's comprehension of its metes and bounds.

To remain close to God, our minds must be occupied on God's love and how it cannot be measured. It is hard to "think" of two things at once. Either we are occupied with Godly things or we are occupied by "un-Godly" things. The choice is ours. Either we think about what might be "true" or we suffer the "consequences" for our laziness and idleness. David illuminated this for us. Mortal man continually "wars within" to determine which will conquer our minds and hearts.

### **John 6:1-21**

***Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."***

***When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.***

***When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.***

If one is planning to host a party with the possibility of hundreds or thousands showing up to eat (that's why we send out "R.S.V.P." cards) one cannot know how much food to purchase, how to cook it and where to serve it. Most of the "important" events of the Bible occur with a meal or celebration as their backdrops. There was not enough "money" to buy sufficient food for the masses nor was there any way of getting the food out to the people other than by way of

a miracle. (Some may argue that this was the first example of the use of “deacons” to do the “waiting on tables” as recorded in the Book of Acts). After all, deacons are ordinary Christians who are called to an appointed task to meet physical needs in ministry to God’s people. Was this about “feeding the masses” or was it about showing the Disciples that God is faithful to provide for our needs? The “people” were obviously “hungry” for healing and “hungry” for food as there is not a lot of food to be foraged along the coastline of the Sea of Galilee. Our preacher would have passed our Slim Jims and Big Red sodas. One young boy was prepared to feed himself because he brought five barley loaves and two fishes. He probably had been sent out by his mother with enough food for his “daily bread”. The barley loaves were most likely cooked on a flat stone (think Pita bread) at the home hearth and the fish were probably “smoked” or “dried” with salt, sunlight and sea air to preserve them. I personally don’t like “kippered herring” as do my “Limey” friends. It is definitely an “acquired taste”. It was a snack for a boy that God turned into a “meal fit for a King.” The mother knew the “truth” of her son’s hunger and the diners being blessed was the “consequence” or her simple act of love directed toward her son. When we use our “lunch” to feed the “hungry”, we do the work of God. Some churches even time their services and “rush” the service “quitting time” in order to beat another religious group to the local eatery. Sermons would certainly be much longer if congregations were allowed to eat while the preacher TALKED. Everyone ate their fill and there were enough “scraps” that they filled many baskets. Where God is, there is abundance. God is the “secret ingredient” that turns our meager efforts into “miracles” of service to show His love. Is this parabolic teaching as much about the love of God as it is about the love of the boy’s mother?

Jesus had to run from the crowd with “full bellies” to prevent their forcibly making him their “king”. Stuff peoples’ pocketbooks and stomachs (or at least promise them full “bellies” and full “pocketbooks”), promise them HOPE and they will “stuff” the ballot boxes for you. People choose leaders by “what they BELIEVE others can do for them”. So it was and so shall it ever be. Jesus wisely ran from their misplaced desires.

At the end of the day, the disciples got into a boat and started back across the Sea of Galilee to return to Capernaum (the “home” of the fishing fleet) and once again, like last week, a storm arose and they were having to work hard to make any headway. About three or four miles from shore, they saw Jesus walking on the sea coming toward them. I wonder why they didn’t LEAVE with Jesus in the boat with them but, that’s just the way my mind works. The “truth” was that Jesus did not “need the disciples” but, they need Him. The consequences were that they reached the shore very quickly and safely. Maybe it’s a stretch to like these passages with the concept of “truth or consequences” but it made sense to me as I wrote. We can seek the “truth” and fill our hearts, minds and lives with it OR we can face the “consequences” of our failure to do so. That is the ultimate in “Truth or Consequences.”

