

eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, August 30, 2009

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

Sex, anyone?

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:

Song of Solomon 2:8-13

Psalm 45:1-2, 7-10

James 1:17-27

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Song of Solomon 2:8-13

The voice of my beloved!

***Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.***

***My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.***

***Look, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing in at the windows,
looking through the lattice.***

My beloved speaks and says to me:

***“Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.”***

SEX: at last, something I know a little bit about. The Song of Solomon is a “sex book”. It is a collection of praise directed at the “object” of the writer’s affection. Yes, it is a prejudiced view of the “loved one” told in terms of reference to other animals and objects. Love “colors” our objectivity and clouds our vision from imperfection. This is an idealized “cookbook” for love-making? It is about sex

and sexuality told in euphemisms and parabolic speech. We are forced to see the subject of the writings through eyes blurred with the passage of time. "Love language" is seldom true in the strict sense of the "truth". Obviously, the woman you call the "most beautiful woman in the world" is not the WORLD'S choice for "most beautiful woman" BUT she can be the "most beautiful woman" in YOUR WORLD. That is opinion and NOT a lie if it is told sincerely and with actions to back up the opinion. All of "love-making" is an opinion. It is often "as we would desire it to be" rather than "as it really is". The Song of Solomon is full of HOPE, LOVE and FAITH in sensual language. It is what intimate partners think and say. IS IT HOW WE HAVE TO PERCEIVE GOD? When we pray to the Creator, we must have the same sense of intimacy in order to penetrate our own prejudices and "truth". God is a "spirit" and must be addressed from the soul just as one would address a lover. God seduces us back to himself: the Bible is a story of seduction as much as it is about "rules". God wants to have an intimate relationship with HIS CREATION. Why do we mistrust God's "love"? Is it because we have not learned to "love" another human? Some have asked, "Why did those "stiff Jewish Rabbis" include this "sex manual" in the Hebrew scriptures?" Perhaps they did so because intimacy and "love-making" are a natural part of being human and sexuality is a gift from our Creator for our pleasure and enrichment. Sex and sexuality are only "dirty" because we have made them so by putting in "our two-cents-worth" as "opinions" and we have made the godly into something "dirty". WE have made sexuality into back-room activity by our suppression of God's gift. Sex will happen whenever humans interact. There is a catch: God also gives us **brains and** genitals. Sex and sexuality MAY divide us or unite us. We all want to use our genitalia without using our brains and we know what that leads to, don't we? Sexuality WITH intimacy is the closest we may come to Heaven in this existence. Sex without intimacy is only an act of selfishness. The Bible is "pro" sex. The Bible is "anti" sex without INTIMACY and commitment. This is a "how-to" book for those who would act sexually without knowledge. After all, God said, "Go forth and MULTIPLY". Unless we can learn to reproduce like amoebas by splitting ourselves, we must have SEX to be obedient. Many times, we sow our "wild oats" and pray for "crop failure". A committed relationship with intimacy greatly reduces the stress and improves the "outcome" of our sexuality. Even the comedian, Ron White, finally came to this conclusion. If HE can figure it out, there is hope for the rest of us.

Psalm 45:1-2, 7-10

1

***My heart is stirring with a noble song;
let me recite what I have fashioned for the king; *
my tongue shall be the pen of a skilled writer.***

2

You are the fairest of men; *

grace flows from your lips,
because God has blessed you for ever.

7

***Your throne, O God, endures for ever and ever, *
a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom;
you love righteousness and hate iniquity.***

8

***Therefore God, your God, has anointed you *
with the oil of gladness above your fellows.***

9

***All your garments are fragrant with myrrh, aloes, and cassia, *
and the music of strings from ivory palaces makes you glad.***

10

Kings' daughters stand among the ladies of the court; *
on your right hand is the queen,
adorned with the gold of Ophir.

Everyone in advertising knows that “sex sells”. Watch even a modicum of TV and this will become obvious. The advertisers use SEX to sell everything from Viagra to deodorant. This psalm is in praise of King David as a “man’s man” or a “ladies’ man”. Sexuality is a gift from God. Read the psalm again if you didn’t get it the first time. “Beauty” and “sexuality” are not necessarily conjoined twins. Attractiveness is a “feeling” and seldom a tangible “fact”. What “attracts” you to God? Is it his “wealth”, his “power”, his “money” or his “love”? What “attracted” you to Jesus? Was it that “he would take care of you”? John Wesley was attracted to God by a “warm feeling”. How do you “feel” about God? Unless there is something realistic about our attraction, it is only a “feeling” and we attempt to make the “simple” into something “complex”. Some people have “looks”. Some have “money” and some have “power”. What attracted you to your “significant other”? Hair and teeth either fall out or change colors. Beauty is transient in the physical sense. The same lure that attracted you to a human will “attract” you to the Creator. Some things cannot be explained, they just “are”. We cheapen our sexuality and our spirituality when we try too hard to analyze them. Will we allow God to “seduce” us back into an intimate relationship? To do so, we have to “let down our false pretense” and become “intimate” in the same way that we do in our sexual lives. You probably have never contemplated “sex with God” because of our ignorance of intimacy. Intimacy is not always associated with sex and sexuality. WE are the problem. Until we jettison our “opinions” about sex and sexuality, we can never bask in the glow of true “spiritual union” with another human or our Creator. “Let go and let God” has a much more applicable meaning in light of this information. God is knocking at our heart’s door with roses and candy waiting to become “intimate” with us. Fall in “love” with God again for the first time.

James 1:17-27

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Can you name the “perfect gifts” that God has given to you? One of the greatest “perfect” gifts God ever gave me is the intimate relationship I have with my wife. I hurt for those who never know such JOY in their lives. The “God” of the Song of Solomon and the Psalms is the SAME God of the New Testament “Common Era” and today. God does not change from loving to un-loving because of the human “passage of time”. God does not change with the seasons or the political party in the Congress. God does not change with our physical health or the status of our credit ratings. Gratitude should not be dependent on our physical or financial “health”. Likewise, our “commitment” to our relationship with the Creator should be unshakable and unchangeable. You’ve got to appreciate the imagery used in this passage about those who “look in the mirror” and quickly “forget what they were like”. Oh, that we could see ourselves as others and God see us. Reality is not pretty for most of us. You have truly “grown up” when you look into the mirror and “see your parent’s or grand-parent’s face” staring back at you. Those who have been “changed” by faith often forget what life was like before the Holy Spirit was invited into their lives. We often have not forgiven ourselves because we “cannot forget”. Those who “belong to Christ” should be able to look into the “mirror” of truth and see the “perfect gift” of God looking back. If not, then we “forget what we looked like” before and negate the indwelling Spirit’s effects upon our lives. The same God who gave us a Spirit gave us a sexual nature, a brain and a tongue. Unbridled, any or all of these can lead us into perdition. This passage is not about “dirty words” or “four-lettered words”. This passage is about the EFFECTS of the “content” of our hearts, our thoughts, our words AND our sexuality. The sooner we get a handle on

ourselves, the sooner we will become the “redeemed” who mirror the love of God in every aspect of our lives. Even Sam, the piano-player in Casablanca, sang words of truth “A kiss is just a kiss...on this you can rely: the world will always welcome LOVERS as time goes by.” Sex is NOT a four-letter word but, LOVE is.

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

***'This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.'***

You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Nothing will force a change in our opinions as much as “having children”. We attempt to “teach” our children the “rules for living” and live in HOPE that they will comply with OUR rules and ethics. OUR PARENTS had the same false hopes for us as did their parents. Every child has to experience the opportunity for failure AND success that their parents experienced. None of us is smart enough to learn from the “mistakes of others” or this world would be a lot saner. The world of the Pharisees was a world of “rules” and “traditions”. Ideally, we teach our kids to “wash their hands before they eat” as an act of cleanliness and for their own “good”. The Pharisees and Elders took a good act and turned it into “legalism”. WE do the same things to our kids and churches. We have a hard time deciphering the “code” and confuse OUR “rules” with “God’s perfect LAW of LIBERTY”. I have to be constantly on guard, even when writing these discussions, to parse my words to make sure that what I write is complicit with GOD’S plan versus “what I was taught” and “what is traditional”. I have to make the conscious decision about my “opinion” and have the strength of character to “change my opinion” FREQUENTLY. I also allow the reader to form their own opinions and to be able to explain their reasoning for that opinion. You also

have to make the same decisions on almost a daily basis. “Because we have always done it that way” is a cop-out and denies the opportunity for growth and excludes many from fellowship. In our class discussions, the rules are given as: “You can say anything you like as long as you state that it is YOUR OPINION, it is found in “scripture” located in this book and this chapter and this verse, or I just had a question.” Opinions, mine and yours, are like dirty diapers: they are often full of crap and need to be changed. This is what Jesus was trying to tell the Pharisees. What we eat, drink, read or think to ourselves is not defiling. It is what we say or do that DEFILES us as it quickly exposes our heart’s OPINION. The quotation from Isaiah identifies the problem: **“These people honor me with their mouths but, their hearts are far from me; in VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, teaching HUMAN PRECEPTS (opinions) as though they were God’s.”** (MY translation.) God, as our “parent”, wants what is best for his “children” and gives “helpful advice” for OUR benefit. Yes, we (just like OUR parents wanted) would all LIKE for our kids to date “perfect people”, fall in love, marry AND stay married, have kids (grandkids are GREAT) but, that is not always the way things turn out. If we feel disappointed when things do not go according to our “plan” for OUR kids, imagine how God, the Father, must feel when WE don’t follow HIS PLAN? IF we can see things through God’s eyes, we can identify HIS HAND supporting us through every “disappointment” in life. What we screw up, God can change to something better IF we only have faith enough to see it. Even Abraham screwed up the promise of God and tried to “help” God with Hagar. David screwed up with his affair with Bathsheba but, gave us Solomon, the “sexy” compiler of the Song of Solomon. Remember this if you don’t hear anything else: **“EVERY time we (or, our children) step off the path God has planned for us, there is FORGIVENESS that abounds because of the LOVE OF GOD so that we can recover and “get back on the path”.** Intimacy with our Father in Heaven is what opens the channels of communication so that we can FEEL the LOVE of God seducing us back to himself. Yes, the entire scope of scripture is a love story of God’s seducing us back into an intimate relationship. Redemption is God’s way of “buying us back from ourselves.” This is the ultimate “spiritual intimacy”. The title: **“Sex, anyone?”** was only to get you to read this and it worked.