

eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, April 18, 2010

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

Third Sunday of Easter

What's for breakfast?

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This week's Lectionary readings:

Acts 9:1-6, (7-20)

Psalm 30

Revelation 5:11-14

John 21:1-19

"If the sky falls, have clouds for breakfast." - from a greeting card I received I want to share something with you that I have learned about myself: I make a wonderful friend and a formidable enemy. Having been "fooled" by many people, I reserve judgment on people as being friends until the evidence points to the contrary. I work continually to understand myself and others so that I can discern my heart and their hearts. It is a life work and causes me to ask some hard questions. IF Jesus KNOWS how I feel, did Jesus have enemies? Did Jesus have friends? The fact that he had both encourages me that He knows EXACTLY how I feel as I experience MY human life. Obviously, Saul hated Jesus and went to great pains to undo His life and ministry BEFORE the "Road to Damascus" experience. Jesus had lots of "acquaintances" but few real "friends". There was plenty of room at the base of the cross. Even Peter, who spent the majority of three years with Jesus during his roving, itinerate ministry was quick to deny even knowing him. Did Jesus hate anyone? He apparently did not like or respect many of those who sought to kill him or condemn him. I know a lot about the "humor of Jesus" from my study of the language and its irony, sarcasm and tangential comments that skewered many of his "enemies". But, what about it, did Jesus "hate" anyone or anything? Okay, call me a heretic or an agnostic but, haven't you ever thought about this issue? Is "hate" ever justified? IF Jesus was "part God and part man", hate would have been a part of his human nature. A study of scripture reveals only "opinions" of those who attempted to paint Jesus in the best possible light as they tried to persuade others to believe in the divinity of Christ. Editors can make us look one way or the other depending on their particular "bent". The people who wrote the Gospels were all FRIENDS of Jesus with a mission of putting the best light possible on the life of Christ. Are we assuming that no one wrote any "hate mail"? Outside of "scripture", very little historical record exists about Jesus other than from Josephus, the survivor of Masada so, who can believe him? Those who canonized scripture would per force exclude anything that painted Christ as anything outside the possibility of his being "only God". I look in scripture to see a MAN who overcame his humanity BECAUSE he had a divine nature. I would

find Jesus more “believable” if I knew he could be angry and hate just as I. I love and respect Jesus as LORD because I sense that He KNOWS how I feel and gives me strength to persist despite my human nature toward hatred, envy and bigotry. Yes, I am very prejudiced. I am prejudiced against IGNORANCE, those who have CHOSEN to remain ignorant about these important issues. I envy those who can blindly believe without even examining the record and asking questions. The “Old Testament” is full of wrathful acts of God toward his creation because of their sins and disobedience. Did God magically change between the closing of the Old Testament canon and the beginning of the writings of the New Testament? Be very careful in your answer because you might raise the possibility that God “changed” and we believe this to be impossible? IF God did not “change”, and, we believe that Jesus IS God, then it must logically infer that Jesus could be wrathful and hate? The Gnostics explained this by having a “God of the Old Testament” who was a vengeful God and a “Loving God” who somehow appeared in New Testament times. “Blind faith” is just that: BLIND. My faith is “eyes wide-open” and I am continually looking to gain even greater faith. People have always changed their theology to support their ignorance. Jesus stated the dilemma best when he said, “You believe in God? Believe also in me.” Trust God. Ask the hard questions. Think for yourself and your faith will grow as you find answers that you can “live with”.

Acts 9:1-6, (7-20)

Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." [The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go,

for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

This is the famous "Road to Damascus" story that Paul uses as his bona fides for being an "Apostle called out of due season". Note that only Saul was blinded by the "light" but others heard the "voice". Did this really happen? Does God select only certain people for salvation or "special ministries"? What about the guys who were with Saul on the road? Saul, the zealot, went to the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem and got writs to go to Damascus and put followers of Jesus into chains and bring them back for trial as seditionists and heretics as part of the "persecution". Note that Saul was sightless and did not eat or drink FOR THREE DAYS. Saul was helpless for three days? I wonder what went through his mind during those three LONG days. Luke is the supposed author of the Book of Acts and later companion to Paul on his missionary journey. Note that this episode occurs "post Pentecost" when the Holy Spirit gave birth to the "church" in Jerusalem. Also note that Ananias was "called" by God to administer to Saul and to baptize Saul. Ananias obviously had heard of Saul and was afraid of him. Did Ananias "hate" Saul? Later, Saul's name was changed to Paul and he would write MOST of the New Testament and act as the most vocal spokesperson for the Lord throughout the "known world". Wouldn't it be "nice" if God gave you and me the same "conversion experience" that would change our lives from hate to love for Christ? Saul obviously was a practicing Jew who thought he was doing "God's work" to purge these heretics. The best evidence for this event's having occurred is that Paul became a fervent advocate for Christ's being the Son of God. What "changed" you and me from a state of "hating Christ" into a state of "loving Christ"? Was your "conversion" sudden or was it "gradual" like for most people? Do you know anyone who "hates God"? First, one has to define "hate" and "love". Worse than hate is APATHY which is "no feeling either way." Many are apathetic toward God and they pay the price for their apathy. Paul paid the price for his "conversion". What "prices" have you and I paid? It matters not what the greatest "theologian" or "preacher" thinks about God. It only matters what you and I, individually, think about God. So, what, if at all, do you think about God?

Psalm 30 Page 621, BCP

Exaltabo te, Domine="I will exalt you, Lord."

1

*I will exalt you, O LORD,
because you have lifted me up *
and have not let my enemies triumph over me.*

2

*O LORD my God, I cried out to you, *
and you restored me to health.*

3

*You brought me up, O LORD, from the dead; *
you restored my life as I was going down to the grave.*

4

*Sing to the LORD, you servants of his; *
give thanks for the remembrance of his holiness.*

5

*For his wrath endures but the twinkling of an eye, *
his favor for a lifetime.*

6

*Weeping may spend the night, *
but joy comes in the morning.*

7

*While I felt secure, I said,
"I shall never be disturbed. *
You, LORD, with your favor, made me as strong as the mountains."*

8

*Then you hid your face, *
and I was filled with fear.*

9

*I cried to you, O LORD; *
I pleaded with the Lord, saying,*

10

*"What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the Pit? *
will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?"*

11

*Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me; *
O LORD, be my helper."*

12

*You have turned my wailing into dancing; *
you have put off my sack-cloth and clothed me with joy.*

13

*Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing; *
O LORD my God, I will give you thanks for ever.*

I never read this psalm that I don't think of the Richard Chamberlain movie "Joy

in the Morning". Some of you may remember the movie and you are showing your age. God is wrathful? God grants mercy? What is the difference between "wrath" and "hate"? Can you have "righteous wrath"? What chapped off Jesus that he "cleansed the Temple"? It is very human to hate. It is very Godly to love. Perhaps our ability to hate and to love only gives us choices in life to either be controlled by our human nature or our Godly nature? Psychologists tell us that we all contain the ability to be either murderous or merciful. Are these two sides of the same coin? Hate is not "bad". The "fruits" of hatred are abominable and an abomination to OUR spirits. Each day we get the choice to either hate or love. I hate death, especially the death of my friends and family. What do you hate? Is there any reason to "hate" anything? The logical mind would tell us that ANY emotion that does not lead to a positive outcome is self-destructive and is to be avoided. Hate is not logical because it is often an unproductive emotion and wastes time, talent and assets. I came to this when I realized that I hated someone who did not know of my hatred. Swallowed hatred hurts only the hater. Vocalized hatred MAY lead to resolution and understanding. Try it. You may find that your hatred was only a misunderstanding of the object of hate. Nothing stops a conversation faster than a screamed "I HATE YOU." Let me suggest that the vocalization be worded in this way: "I hate it when you DO or SAY such and so" rather than "global hatred" of EVERYTHING about someone. And, THEN, LISTEN to their explanation. Their response may be very logical and a lack of understanding on the part of both people involved. Many a relationship has been healed by such a technique and friendships established. Also realize that we quickly identify OUR FAULTS in others. We might actually be "hating that characteristic we fail to see in ourselves". Let me know how it works out for you. Prepare to be surprised.

Revelation 5:11-14

I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice,

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing,

"To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped.

John alone knew the meaning of this verbiage. I will not attempt to delve into the psyche of John as he was alone on the island. I got nothing other than we should honor the NAME of Jesus as worthy of our worship.

John 21:1-19

Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

Is this just another "fish story"? After the events of the crucifixion, Peter went back to what he knew: fishing. He took along his buddies for a night on the Sea of Galilee but they wasted their time because they caught no fish. They did not recognize Jesus standing on the shore when they returned at dawn. Once again, Jesus told the "pros" how to fish. They cast their nets only on the OTHER SIDE OF THE BOAT and they caught so many fish that they could barely haul in

their nets. This huge catch told Peter that it was Jesus standing on the shore and calling to them. Fishermen fished naked? Sure, it was dark and sweaty work casting and hauling nets all night. People did not have a lot of clothes and they probably tried to preserve them as best they could. Peter put on some clothes and dived (dove is a bird) into the water and swam to shore, about a hundred yards. The others got the boat to shore and had breakfast with Jesus. Jesus KNEW that they would be hungry from fishing all night and had prepared for their needs: charcoaled fish and bread which JESUS served to the men. After the meal, Jesus asked Peter a rhetorical question, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He asked him three times if he loved him. Was this to allow Peter to save face after his three-fold denial of Christ at the time of the trial? With each questioning of Peter's love, the Lord implored Peter to "tend" or "feed" His sheep. John indicated that Peter would be led to places he did not want to go in the cause of Christ. Where have you and I been "led" to "feed the sheep" or "tend the sheep" because we claim to "love the Lord"? My pastor likens being a preacher during the week to "cleaning out the barn of manure" as part of "tending the sheep". Tending sheep means seeing to their health and welfare at times when they won't appreciate it or ask for it. We "tend and feed" the sheep NOT to please the sheep. We strive to tend and feed them because that is what the Lord has asked us to do. It is ironic that we often come to "hate" the sheep because they don't appreciate our "help". It is okay to "hate" their ingratitude and their messing up the barn but, we serve the Lord so we are challenged to put aside our hatred of their actions and attitude and LOVE the sheep because they are the Lord's sheep. "Be not weary in well-doing" has special import for those whose task it is to "tend or feed" the sheep of God. It is very humbling to learn that WE are all sheep in need of tending and feeding. Sheep are basically dumb animals born looking for a place to die. Only by the intervention of the "Good Shepherd" do any of us survive to maturity. Be thankful that the Lord has allowed us to be caretakers of his "sheep" and take joy in our efforts without expecting their gratitude or appreciation. We, too, have fed and "entertained angels unaware." We have also "cleaned out their barns". After a long stint of "sheep tending" Jesus invites US to commune with Him, to have breakfast and be restored so we can get back to work. What's for breakfast?