

## eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, August 29, 2010

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

### **Laugh or cry. It's your choice.**

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.

This week's Lectionary readings:

Jeremiah 2:4-13

Psalm 81:1, 10-16

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Luke 14:1, 7-14

Dear readers, I apologize that these past two discussions have been slow in their arrivals. I didn't even finish or mail last week's discussion. Unfortunately, I am having my THIRD back surgery in the past twelve days Friday afternoon. This is why surgeons hate operating on other surgeons or nurses. IF it can go wrong, it will go wrong on another doctor or nurse. I had surgery, developed a blood clot around my spinal cord, had it "washed out" under x-ray direction and now, the clot has recurred indicating that the bleeding needs to be cauterized by opening up my back AGAIN. I need your prayers so that I can get back to work and make a living, raise money for a campaign and run hard for County Judge. Those of you with chronic pain know just how chronic pain drains your body and mind. Given the choice to either cry or laugh, I choose to laugh. I remain hopeful and optimistic that the "third time" will be the charm. All I can control is my ATTITUDE and I'm getting adequate opportunity to "practice what I preach". Your prayers are greatly appreciated. Unfortunately, Gaye has started back to teaching school so this is really cramping her style. She has proven once again to be my best friend and best nurse. Tomorrow is another day. Randy will teach the class again this Sunday so, please, be nice to him. Every one of us can be replaced even ME.

### **Jeremiah 2:4-13**

**Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus says the LORD:**

**What wrong did your ancestors find in me**

**that they went far from me,**

**and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves?**

**They did not say, "Where is the LORD**

**who brought us up from the land of Egypt,**

**who led us in the wilderness,**

**in a land of deserts and pits,**

**in a land of drought and deep darkness,**

**in a land that no one passes through,**

**where no one lives?"**

*I brought you into a plentiful land  
to eat its fruits and its good things.  
But when you entered you defiled my land,  
and made my heritage an abomination.  
The priests did not say, "Where is the LORD?"  
Those who handle the law did not know me;  
the rulers transgressed against me;  
the prophets prophesied by Baal,  
and went after things that do not profit.  
Therefore once more I accuse you, says the LORD,  
and I accuse your children's children.  
Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look,  
send to Kedar and examine with care;  
see if there has ever been such a thing.  
Has a nation changed its gods,  
even though they are no gods?  
But my people have changed their glory  
for something that does not profit.  
Be appalled, O heavens, at this,  
be shocked, be utterly desolate,  
says the LORD,  
for my people have committed two evils:  
they have forsaken me,  
the fountain of living water,  
and dug out cisterns for themselves,  
cracked cisterns  
that can hold no water.*

Children begin doubting their parent's wisdom and advice soon after the age of two and it continues for at least 18 more years. This is what I call "natural consequences". The Israelites "forgot" the source of their sustenance and safety and turned away from God and paid the price. It was a gradual erosion of their principles rather than a sudden change. Since we are all "children of God", it only stands to reason that we, too, would continually question the wisdom of our forefathers and foremothers. This passage from Jeremiah recounts how we have disappointed our "Father" by two means: we have forsaken God and we have thought ourselves sufficient to supply all our needs. The point is: the only thing over which you and I have any control is our ATTITUDE. An attitude of humility and gratefulness will suffice to allow us to survive and thrive. An attitude of arrogance and ungratefulness is a sure path to our own destruction.

**Psalm 81:1, 10-16 Page 704, BCP**

Exultate Deo

1

***Sing with joy to God our strength \*  
and raise a loud shout to the God of Jacob.***

10

***I am the LORD your God,  
who brought you out of the land of Egypt and said, \*  
"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."***

11

***And yet my people did not hear my voice, \*  
and Israel would not obey me.***

12

***So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their hearts, \*  
to follow their own devices.***

13

***Oh, that my people would listen to me! \*  
that Israel would walk in my ways!***

14

***I should soon subdue their enemies \*  
and turn my hand against their foes.***

15

***Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him, \*  
and their punishment would last for ever.***

16

***But Israel would I feed with the finest wheat \*  
and satisfy him with honey from the rock.***

The same lack of appreciation and honor of the Israelites toward the "God of Salvation" is, once again, recounted in this psalm. It is a dirge about how the Israelites abandoned God and suffered the consequences of that abandonment. Is that my problem? In my arrogance, have you and I abandoned God thinking that we could survive just fine without His blessings and guidance? God wants us to dine on "the finest wheat bread and the sweetest honey" but we chose "fast food" and "empty calories" that slowly kill our bodies and our spirits? An ATTITUDE of thankfulness and gratitude is the best antidote for this "poison".

### **Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16**

***Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." So we can say with***

confidence,

*"The Lord is my helper;  
I will not be afraid.*

*What can anyone do to me?"*

*Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you;  
consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus  
Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

**Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that  
is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to  
share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.**

It is one of the greatest joys of my life to be part of a fellowship of believers (church family) whose prime raison d'être is to be hospitable to all who enter our doors. IF we show kindness and hospitality to people based only on their "being just like us", we fail to be hospitable and become a "club". These passages are a warning to the Hebrews to put aside their false pretenses of insisting that "new-comers" become Jews first before accepting Christ. It also puts a DEEP onus upon those already in leadership in the "fellowship of believers". The "established leaders" are to be "role models" for the new-comers. If the leaders are not hospitable to the outsiders, neither will the others in the pews. Churches that are "genuinely" hospitable are soon met with a quandary: where do you put all the new people and how do you find places of ministry for them? The sooner new people are put to work doing THEIR ministry with the support of the "leaders", the sooner they will feel "ownership" and be incorporated into the assembly of believers. I tell you a great mystery: if things work as they should, we are comforted by comforting others and we are served by serving others. The "job" of a church is as simple as is stated here: ***Live like you respect and honor God's sovereignty and treat others with the hospitality you would show to God.*** Yes, it's just that simple. We get into trouble when we try to change the rules to suit OUR needs and wants. A servant SERVES. A worshipper WORSHIPS. The "saved" LIVE LIKE THEY ARE SAVED. At times, "Be ye KIND to one another" is the hardest of commandments for me. The "best" way of showing that God loves ME is to show that same LOVE to OTHERS. Good things happen to evil people and evil things happen to good people. I cannot explain it other than "that's just the way it is". My ATTITUDE determines how I see either situation. Two of the best tools for surviving life are: FAITH and a sense of humor. I CHOOSE to believe and laugh.

### **Luke 14:1, 7-14**

***On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you***

***may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.***

***He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."***

Having recently ventured into politics, I can affirm that “they” are watching ALL the time. Whatever I say will appear in a newspaper or a blog within hours of its being said. Jesus survived their scrutiny because He told the truth and really did not care about what others thought about him. However, Jesus did care deeply about how they thought about God. I really think these “parables” are more “stories drawn from life” rather than “parabolic teachings”. The points are clear to all who have been confronted by similar social settings. It has happened to me, has it happened to you? As a candidate, I try my best to sit at the back of the room unless I am specifically invited to occupy the dais. This story is NOT about seating guests as much as it is about “hospitality” to ALL regardless of their appearance or stature in the community. Honoring “VIPs” is usual. Honoring the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind WITHOUT REQUIRING repayment of their being honored is charity of the best kind and has eternal consequences. Labels divide people. Impartiality unites people. Be nice to everyone and your kindness will make you happier and, I believe, make God smile.