

## eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, July 25, 2010

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

### **From the whoring of Gomer to the faithfulness of Jesus**

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This week's Lectionary readings:

Hosea 1:2-10

Psalm 85

Colossians 2:6-15, (16-19)

Luke 11:1-13

We ramble through the four scriptures for this week in search of a "thread" that binds them to each other. My mind is distracted so I have difficulty ascertaining the chain that links them. Make a game of it and see if you can find the link. I think it might be "reconciliation and restoration" but, I could be wrong as I often am wrong but, seldom in doubt.

### **Hosea 1:2-10**

***When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." So he went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. And the LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."***

***She conceived again and bore a daughter. Then the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them. But I will have pity on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen."***

***When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not my people and I am not your God."***

***Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."***

Hosea was an interesting character of the Hebrew Bible. He married a prostitute at the advice of God? The story of Hosea is the story of the People of Israel who had "acted the whore" toward God in that they had not "remained faithful".

Biblical names often have a “meaning” that relates to the events surrounding their birth or life. Have you looked up the “meaning” of your name? Do you know any woman named “Gomer”? I doubt it. My “given” name, Albert, means “noble” or “bright”. No, I did NOT name myself. You may look up English and Biblical names at <http://www.behindthename.com/>. “Jezreel” means “God scatters”, for instance. There is often a “hidden story” in the meaning of names so, do some research and learn something new. Did this story “really happen” or was it allegorical? Hosea married Gomer and she bore “him” three children, went whoring and was stripped naked and isolated from society for a while. This is an allegory of the relationship of God with Israel? The theme of Hosea is “loss, reconciliation and restoration”. We have all been through this process in our relationships if we have lived very long. “God is NOT WILLING that any should perish but, that all should come to repentance”? As long as humans have drawn breath, this has been a constant thread throughout scripture. My God is the “God of the second chance” and that is good news to me. The “trick” is to not “get lost” so that reconciliation and restoration are not necessary. Hosea did it and so can we. As a result of this restoration, God repeated His promise to bless and increase the numbers of the Israelites.

### **Psalm 85, Page 708, BCP**

#### *Benedixisti, Domine*

1

*You have been gracious to your land, O LORD, \*  
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.*

2

*You have forgiven the iniquity of your people \*  
and blotted out all their sins.*

3

*You have withdrawn all your fury \*  
and turned yourself from your wrathful indignation.*

4

*Restore us then, O God our Savior; \*  
let your anger depart from us.*

5

*Will you be displeased with us for ever? \*  
will you prolong your anger from age to age?*

6

*Will you not give us life again, \*  
that your people may rejoice in you?*

7

*Show us your mercy, O LORD, \*  
and grant us your salvation.*

8

2

- I will listen to what the LORD God is saying, \*  
for he is speaking peace to his faithful people  
and to those who turn their hearts to him.*
- 9
- Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him, \*  
that his glory may dwell in our land.*
- 10
- Mercy and truth have met together; \*  
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*
- 11
- Truth shall spring up from the earth, \*  
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.*
- 12
- The LORD will indeed grant PROSPERITY, \*  
and our land will yield its increase.*
- 13
- Righteousness shall go before him, \*  
and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.*

This is a most interesting psalm in that it travels from thanking God for past deliverance and forgiveness and ends with a vision of how the psalmist WANTS his world to be. (See the discussion of the “Lord’s Prayer” below.) Our prayers are often “as we would like things to be” rather than how they really are. Worthy prayers should always START with thanksgiving for life and our survival thus far. It is “interesting” in that it gives “mercy”, “truth”, “righteousness”, “peace” and “truth” a likeness to a “person”. It would, indeed, be a blessing IF “mercy” and “truth” met together and “righteousness” and “peace” kissed each other. When will “truth” spring up from the earth and when will “righteousness” look down from heaven? Yes, that is the world the psalmist envisioned. Is that the world we inhabit? Not likely. This psalm could easily be our petition to our Creator.

### **Colossians 2:6-15, (16-19)**

***As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.***

***See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when***

**he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.**

**[Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God. ]**

This passage has the “character” similar to a “corporate resolution” because it begins with “AS you have received Christ Jesus...” and ends with “THEREFORE do not let anyone condemn you...” It warns against those who would impose silly dietary rules, rituals or “celebrations” as part of being a “good Christian”. The world is full of joy-stealers who relish creating division and fear where none existed before their insertion into our lives. Fear sells. Division sells. Hate sells. Unless we have “adult” control of our FAITH, someone else will control our faith. Beware the guru who would impose “extra rules” upon us as qualifications for salvation. Jesus gave PLAIN guidelines with GREAT promise. Paul warns the Colossians to focus on thanksgiving because it would keep them “centered” on truth and keep them focused on unity in FAITH. Even in New Testament times, there was a plethora of “philosophies” that tempted those who were not “grounded in FAITH” so that they were “blown about by every wind of contention”. Many were led astray into “sects” and “cults” that separated them from the truth that Paul had taught them. Paul’s description of FAITH is similar to the function of an umbilical cord and placenta that “connects” the mother and child until the child can live unattached on its own. Faith is our umbilical cord to our Creator? Sounds good to me.

### **Luke 11:1-13**

***Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say:***

***Father, hallowed be your name.***

***Your kingdom come.***

***Give us each day our daily bread.***

***And forgive us our sins,***

***for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.***

***And do not bring us to the time of trial."***

***And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' And he***

*answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.*

*"So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

Most people tend to focus on the "Lord's Prayer" which is cited in the beginning of this passage and overlook the paragraphs that follow. The Prayer and the paragraphs that follow are one "thought process" that are conjoined and must be seen as a continual, logical progression. Jesus was seen to be praying and the curious disciple wanted to know the "secret" to a "method" of an effective prayer. The "Lord's Prayer" is a suggested outline of what a "perfect" prayer should contain? This "prayer", along with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, is one of the two most memorized passages in the Bible. Have they become "rote" recitations without meaning? Even when voiced from memory, they give quiet comfort and solace. They are revered because they are "short and to the point" which makes them "user friendly" and their usefulness spans the centuries. This "version" says "***When you pray, say***" but other versions say "***In this MANNER, therefore pray***". The two introductions are congruent but not synonymous. Is the prayer "perfect" or is the FORM "perfect"? Is a "form prayer" without a personal touch might like sending a form letter to God? I despise "form letters" because they are so impersonal. Is it rather like a response from your Senator? God wants us to put our own words and thoughts into our prayers in a manner much as a small child might crawl into their parent's lap and whisper into their ear. Praying is easy to learn: just have kids or run for office.

The parable that follows the "Lord's Prayer" is often called "The Parable of the Importunate Neighbor" because he PERSISTENTLY insisted on the response of the neighbor to his needs. Jesus follows this up with the suggestion that we be PERSISTENT in asking, searching and knocking so that we can be answered, find and have doors opened to us. If human parents treat their children's request with sensitivity and deference, how much more will a loving Heavenly Father treat his children with what they NEED rather than what they WANT? Is the key to our requests being granted our PERSISTENCE? Note that we are not guaranteed that our request will be answered exactly. Our only "guarantee" is that we will get AN ANSWER sufficient to our NEEDS, find what we NEED and have the doors we NEED, opened. We have not because we ASK NOT? Note that this parable and Christ's discussion of the issues follow the "Lord's Prayer". Jesus PLEADED with God to not make him go to the cross but, He accepted the

answer He received. The prayers “worked” when Jesus accepted the WILL OF THE FATHER. Could Jesus have NOT ACCEPTED the “task that lay before him”? Jesus got AN ANSWER and accepted the cross for YOU AND ME. Can you think of a better gift than Christ’s being a WILLING SACRIFICE for each of us? The Creator gave up the life of the “perfect lamb” as a blood offering for OUR sins as a substitution for our sinful selves? If we don’t accept the gift, we make a wonderful gift into a shabby trinket and belie “For God so loved the WORLD that he gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”