

## eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, June 13, 2010

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

### **A “legacy” is what we leave. A life is what we keep.**

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:

1 Kings 21:1-10, (11-14), 15-21a

Psalms 5:1-8

Galatians 2:15-21

Luke 7:36-8:3

Forgive me for I am under a lot of “pre-vacation” stress and in a “funny” mood. This is the discussion for the second Sunday of my vacation, as promised. I hope that those who attend class are enjoying having someone new to harass with their questions. I miss you and am thinking of you as I travel home. I should be home late tonight or early tomorrow morning. I am thinking of a good friend who will inter his brother on Monday in the Fort Sam Houston Cemetery in San Antonio. I hope to be home in time for the services at the gravesite. Tomorrow, like you, I will be back in the saddle and riding “drag” on the herd. (The “drag” cowboys rode at the rear of the cattle herd and usually got a face full of dirt, urine, smells and manure.) Vacations are great but one eventually has to come down off the mountain and off the tropical isle and get back into the trenches. Life is lived in the trenches where it is “hand to hand” combat that makes vacations so sweet.

### **1 Kings 21:1-10, (11-14), 15-21a**

***The following events took place: Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. And Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house; I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance." Ahab went home resentful and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him; for he had said, "I will not give you my ancestral inheritance." He lay down on his bed, turned away his face, and would not eat.***

***His wife Jezebel came to him and said, "Why are you so depressed that you will not eat?" He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, `Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard for it'; but he answered, `I will not give you my vineyard.'" His wife Jezebel said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."***

***So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal; she sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who lived with Naboth in his city. She wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the assembly; seat two scoundrels opposite him, and have them bring a charge against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' Then take him out, and stone him to death." [The men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. Just as it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, they proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the assembly. The two scoundrels came in and sat opposite him; and the scoundrels brought a charge against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city, and stoned him to death. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead.]" As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Go, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab set out to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying: Go down to meet King Ahab of Israel, who rules in Samaria; he is now in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. You shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: Have you killed, and also taken possession?" You shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood." Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you. Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, I will bring disaster on you."***

Who are we in this story? The Hebrew Bible is full of stories that either warns us about ourselves or stories that encourage us to mimic the faith, grace and love of the participants. This is one of the “warning stories”. This is a story with a basic theme: selling one’s soul to the “devil” (what is evil) is not good and has far-reaching consequences. Each of the “Ten Commandments” is violated and illustrated somewhere in the Hebrew Bible’s scriptures. The RESULTS of disobeying the “Law” are also described in often gory details. Which of the “ten” are violated in this tale? (“Ten” is in quotes because there are actually 613 “laws” listed in the Hebrew Bible.) The name, Jezebel, has become synonymous with vice, corruption and sin because of the PERSON in this tale. Who would name their precious daughter Jezebel? Who would name their child Adolph Hitler? Would the name predict the “life story” of the one who bears the name? It was common practice in scripture for God to change the name of an individual to mark a change in their “mission” in life, for example, Saul to Paul, Abram to Abraham, etc. The captain of the ship in Melville’s “Moby Dick” was named Ahab (Starbuck was the First Mate, after whom the coffee company is named). Now, back to the story. Ahab was a coveter and a pouter who acted like a two-

year-old child when Naboth refused to sell him the vineyard. He also, at the advice of his wife, Jezebel, bore false witness which led to murder so we can count at least THREE of the TEN that he “broke”. Politics has always been a “contact sport” as we see Jezebel getting the “elders and the nobles” to be complicit in the false accusations and stoning of Naboth. Land that is inherited has “special value”. Like gold, it has never “been worth nothing.” Even today, people often irrationally hold on to inherited “land” which their heirs will sell as soon as their bodies attain room temperature. When I was still a young boy, my dirt-poor grandfather told me, “If you ever get any money, buy land because God keeps making fools but, he quit making land.” That should be in large print over the door of every real estate office. Land is a great “investment” which will hold its value to allow us to do greater things with the proceeds later in life. You can read what eventually happened to Jezebel and Ahab and all their male relatives in the last verses of chapter 21. Ahab and Jezebel never got to enjoy the field they killed to possess. What great sins have you and I committed that the “wages” must be paid many years after the act? God may have forgiven us but, the world will never forget. What did we learn from this story? “The wages of sin is death?” That could be one answer to the question, couldn’t it?

**Psalm 5:1-8 Page 588, BCP**

*Verba mea auribus= “Word of mine hear” OR “Hear my words”  
OR “Give ear to my words.” (Declension determines word order.)*

1

*Give ear to my words, O LORD; \*  
consider my meditation.*

2

*Hearken to my cry for help, my King and my God, \*  
for I make my prayer to you.*

3

*In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; \*  
early in the morning I make my appeal and watch for you.*

4

*For you are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, \*  
and evil cannot dwell with you.*

5

*Braggarts cannot stand in your sight; \*  
you hate all those who work wickedness.*

6

*You destroy those who speak lies; \*  
the bloodthirsty and deceitful, O LORD, you abhor.*

7

*But as for me, through the greatness of your mercy I will*

*go into your house; \**

*I will bow down toward your holy temple in awe of you.*

**8**

**Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness,**

**because of those who lie in wait for me; \***

**make your way straight before me.**

IF God abhors evil and evil-doers and we are to be “people of God”, does it not make sense that we, too, should avoid and abhor “evil”? Braggarts have no “standing” in God’s eyes because they attempt to usurp the credit for their “success” as being a “self-made person”. My father used to say, “Most self-made men should not have lain off work so soon.” Thanks, Dad, for giving me such great one-liners.

### **Galatians 2:15-21**

**We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.**

This is theological logic 101. You may have to read it slowly and parse each phrase of this passage to achieve understanding of the depths of its intent. We all know people who believe that “doing good works” or “keeping the Law” will suffice for their salvation despite the words of scripture to the contrary. Faith ALLOWS us to accept the GRACE of God so that we are “justified”. This issue of “faith versus works” culminates in the Book of James which gives equal footing (commensal parity) to faith AND works. Paul, once again uses his “Jedi powers” of logic to try to convince the Galatians, and us, that, unless we accept the GRACE of God through FAITH, nothing that we do, even “good works” will suffice to save us. It all boils down to our understanding of the difference between “wages” and “a gift”. We have to “work for” wages but, “gifts” are “free”. “The wages of sin is death” is illustrated in the Ahab and Jezebel tale. Grace is a “gift”. The “gift of salvation” is true GRACE that is “recognized” through Faith which saves us. Unless we submit to the “mind of Christ” and allow His will to be our will, we die a physical and a spiritual death. Only by “giving up the flesh” to live with purpose can we say that “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” It is the classical conundrum of “giving up in order to gain.” Like the

“rich young ruler”, what are we willing to give up to attain salvation? “Whoever gives up his life, for my sake, will SAVE IT.”

### **Luke 7:36-8:3**

**One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him-- that she is a sinner."** Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "Speak." "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

**Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.**

This is the story of Jesus' having lunch with a lawyer (Pharisee), named Simon. A woman "sinner" (could have been anyone, man or woman) came in and anointed the feet of Jesus with expensive perfume, washing them with her tears and drying them with her hair. Of interest is that, in New Testament times, especially in such "important houses" as this lawyer's, it was HOSPITALITY for the host to wash, or have washed, the feet of the guests. Jesus points out this faux pas to his host later in the verses when he compares the kindness of the woman with the lack of common courtesy shown by the Pharisee. The lawyer obviously thought himself "perfect" because he said, "***IF this man were a***

**prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him...that she is a sinner.**” Well, whooptidoo, Simon. That really is the “pot calling the kettle black.” Jesus asked Simon about who would love a creditor more, a person who was forgiven a GREAT debt or one who was forgiven for a SMALL debt. Simon answered correctly: the one who owed the most. I recall another scripture that ties with this one: “To who much is (for)given, much is required.” Are we like the Pharisee and blind to our own sins or are we like the “sinner woman” who fully acknowledged her sinfulness and need of forgiveness? The “point” of this story is very lucid: The greater the sins forgiven, the greater the “love debt” that is owed. Now for a little thought workout: IF this woman was forgiven by Christ, at that instant, WITHOUT baptism and the “thief on the cross” was forgiven WITHOUT baptism, how do we reconcile our deep belief in “no salvation without baptism”? The point is that CHRIST ALONE CAN SAVE US and GOD GETS TO CHOOSE WHOM HE WILL SAVE. You and I can “save” no one. The greatest theologian and preacher cannot “save” anyone. It is the MESSAGE that is important, not the messenger. We can act like “light” and “salt” and “leaven” and POINT them to Christ who can “save” them. You disagree? Tough. Get over it until you can prove otherwise and write your own discussions. Being a “free spirit” and a sentient being, YOU get to CHOOSE whether to accept the “gift” of salvation, or not. Here, my father would think me the heretic and quickly quote the “plan of salvation”: “The five steps to salvation are hear, believe, repent, confess AND be baptized.” It would shock him to hear that “the five step plan” is the “method” of John Wesley’s “Methodism”. Some day, we will KNOW the answer and it probably won’t really matter because God will save us IF it is HIS will. **“God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance?”** Put that in your mind and let it rattle around. I have plenty of room in my “inbox” for your hate mail. Just “Be ye kind one to another.” I am amazed at the number of church buildings which have a “sign” stating, “Preaching the TRUTH in LOVE.” Usually, neither criterion is met because they are preaching “opinion” in “pity” that the hearers are so stupid and won’t follow their plan. Father’s Day is coming. I have quoted a lot from my father’s and my grandfather’s wisdom in their honor. The greatest gift that any father can leave his children is a “good reputation”. My father left me a “good reputation” and I hope to uphold it and leave a “good” one to my kids. In that, I am most fortunate because, not everyone can be proud of their father’s “reputation”. We are encouraged to do the best we can. To those who cannot, remember that God said, “MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT.”