

## eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, March 21, 2010

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

### **Fifth Sunday of Lent**

#### **Course Corrections**

*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:

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalm 126

Philippians 3:4b-14

John 12:1-8

I have just returned from a week of school in Houston. It is the Academy that I taught for many years and it was great to renew and make new friendships with people who want to become “better servants” of their patients. A lot of the talk was about government intrusion between doctors and patients. Many are “getting out of medicine” because they are tired of fighting lawyers, insurance companies and the government to try to take good care of people. Not one mentioned MONEY as their reason for being in medicine or quitting medicine. On top of all that, I have to deal with “politicians” since I “are one”. I have seen the belly of the “beast”. BOTH political parties are filled with crooks and people with only self-interest as their motivations. America needs STATESMEN who will do what is right without worrying about re-election. Elections DO matter. Like elections, sins cannot be “undone”. We have to “deal with” the consequences of our poor judgments. My God is the “God of the second chance” and I am praying that we will be given the opportunity to start over in life and not mess it up this time. All I have control over is MY ATTITUDE. All these passages are about ATTITUDE adjustments. Without a change of ATTITUDE, we are lost. Hopefully, the reader can follow my thoughts through these pages and identify with the people whose stories they contain. The Bible is OUR STORY complete with successes and failures. I hope to make these passages “come to life” so we can see the truths they contain. May God bless our study of OUR STORY.

#### **Isaiah 43:16-21**

***Thus says the LORD,***

***who makes a way in the sea,***

***a path in the mighty waters,***

***who brings out chariot and horse,***

***army and warrior;***

***they lie down, they cannot rise,***

***they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:***

**Do not remember the former things,**

**or consider the things of old.**

**I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.  
The wild animals will honor me,  
the jackals and the ostriches;  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
the people whom I formed for myself  
so that they might declare my praise.**

The longer I live, the more I am convinced that serving others, even those who don't want to be served, is the path to happiness. My ATTITUDE is all I can change. Every day I have a new opportunity to CHANGE MY ATTITUDE. I am not required to change the ATTITUDE of anyone else, only MINE. I have to force myself to be content with the 99 who are grateful for my service and to discount the ATTITUDE of the 1 who does not want my service. The secret to living to be 100 is to live to 99 and then, live one more year. "You're never defeated until you THINK you are." Scripture is full of people who changed their ATTITUDES to ones of service and SUBMISSION to the sovereignty of God. Scripture is full of examples of those who did not change their attitudes and FAILED. It is equally full of examples of those who DID change their ATTITUDES and did great deeds of service even when the service was not appreciated. A jet airliner flying from New York to London is OFF COURSE more than it is ON COURSE because constant "course corrections" are needed to get to the destination. So it is for you and me: each day we have to make a "course correction" to get back on the path. It is called the "past" because it has "passed". Like Paul, we have to accept ourselves for who we are, change our attitude and PRESS ON if we are to be "faithful servants". "This is THE DAY that the Lord has made just for me. I will REJOICE (change MY ATTITUDE) and be GLAD in it."

**Psalm 126 Page 782, BCP**

*In convertendo*

1

***When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, \*  
then were we like those who dream.***

2

***Then was our mouth filled with laughter, \*  
and our tongue with shouts of joy.***

3

***Then they said among the nations, \****

2

**"The LORD has done great things for them."**

4

**The LORD has done great things for us, \*  
and we are glad indeed.**

5

**Restore our fortunes, O LORD, \*  
like the watercourses of the Negev.**

6

**Those who sowed with tears \*  
will reap with songs of joy.**

7

**Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, \*  
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

This psalm is reflexive of the Isaiah passage above and describes a partial fulfillment of the prophecy? It is most hopeful for a time when God would make a "new beginning", a "planting of seeds" and a "reaping with songs of joy." Is this a denial of the aphorism "We reap what we sow"? I think it affirms that, without God's intervention, we WILL reap what we sow. GOD changed the ATTITUDE of the people and the people CHANGED their ATTITUDES to one of gratitude so that what they sowed was changed to a harvest of blessing. If it worked for the People of Israel, will it work for you and me? Do we "sow our wild oats and pray for crop failure"? If we commit crimes, will God keep us from paying for our crimes? Is "back-sliding" a result of a lack of a change of ATTITUDE? It all depends on our ATTITUDE toward who is in charge. As long as I believe that I control anything but MY ATTITUDE, I am doomed to failure. The Israelites found blessing when they changed their ATTITUDE to give control of their lives to God. Is this MY PROBLEM? "Create in me a new heart (ATTITUDE), O Lord." "Happy (ATTITUDE) are they who trust (ATTITUDE) in the Lord." See, it was there all along but, we were too blind to see it.

### **Philippians 3:4b-14**

***If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh , I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.***

***Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming***

**like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.**

***Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.***

Summary in my words: Paul is saying, "I'm more Jewish than any of you but, I do not boast in my being a 'perfect' Jew. In fact, it counts for nothing and I would prefer to not dwell on what was. I cannot move forward while looking back. Nostalgia for the 'past' is a waste of emotion. Don't tell me what you DID, tell what you are DOING. Even as a 'perfect' Jew, I was unable to attain salvation. It is the grace and forgiveness of God through Christ that allows ME and allows YOU to make a new beginning and 'press on' in life to whatever lies ahead. I trust that whatever lies ahead will lead me to the ultimate prize...God's presence." These are words of encouragement. Are we "pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly CALL of God in Christ Jesus"? If not, why not? What do I need to change so that I can "get on with life"? MY GOD is the God of the "new beginning". All that has to change is MY ATTITUDE.

### **John 12:1-8**

***Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him.***

***Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."***

This "Mary" is one of five "Mary's" mentioned in the New Testament. She was the sister of Lazarus and Martha. Much has been made of this event regarding the interpersonal relationship of Mary with Martha, Mary with Lazarus and Mary with Jesus. Again, the reader will note that the Gospel of John contains most of Jesus' "personal relationship" stories contained in the New Testament. John's book tells us more about what the relationships of Jesus to individuals as in the song, "What a FRIEND we have in Jesus." Mary was very grateful to Jesus for raising his friend and her brother, Lazarus. Was this why she washed and anointed the feet of Jesus? Judas, the betrayer, was most interested in the money that was "wasted" by Mary when she used very expensive perfume to anoint Jesus' feet. First, who are you in this story? Are we Lazarus who is just

glad to be alive? Are we the whining Martha because Mary was spending more time with Jesus? Are we Mary who was grateful and wanted to show her gratitude for her brother's life? Or, are we Judas who put a cloud over the time of joy by worrying about the "money"? Judas tried to hide his avarice by saying he was "only thinking about the poor who could use the money." Don't confuse this story with the story of the woman washing Jesus' feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. THERE ARE TWO STORIES THAT ARE SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT. A podiatrist friend of mine was proud to point out that there are LOTS of scriptures about FEET. Do you know of anyone, besides babies, who have "pretty feet"? "How BEAUTIFUL are the FEET of those who run for the Lord." Jesus accepted the gift of the foot anointing with grace and gratitude while predicting the events of the near future. And, secondly, because the "attendees" were so bound up in their own thoughts, they seemed to miss the profound issue of this event. Are we like that? Do we "miss" a lot of what we could have "experienced" because of what is on our minds? Do we keep our minds on WORSHIP all during the events of "church services"? Being human, my mind often wanders to the mundane issues of the week while I am supposed to be thinking about my relationship with God. During the "Lord's Supper", does your mind stay centered on the sacrifice of Jesus or does it wander to temporal things? Are we supposed to remain silent and solemn during the "Lord's Supper"? What about kneeling versus standing? Should anyone be "able to partake" or is there some "test" they must pass before eating? What about "intinction" versus "individual cups"? What about unleavened bread versus yeast bread? What's the difference between letting our minds wander and thinking about "which method is 'correct'"? When I "share" the things going on in my life with the "family gathered to worship", am I, in reality, also "praying" aloud? ATTITUDE IS ALL IMPORTANT IN CHRISTIANITY. The ATTITUDE of the attendees described in the listed scripture determined how they "saw" the event, didn't it? So, might we say that OUR ATTITUDE in worship will determine what we "get" from worshipping? IF we attend our "family reunions" with the wrong ATTITUDE, we are setting ourselves up for anger and disappointment. BUT, if we have the right ATTITUDE, we will "enjoy" our visiting with those who attend and it will bless our lives. Church is a "family reunion" without the green Jello with carrots and miniature marshmallows. I have been in churches where "clapping" and "laughing" and "kids" were verboten. (Just TRY washing feet and they will RUN away.) I don't "clap my hands" to praise the "performers", I "clap" as a means of saying "AMEN" to the efforts of the "performers" to glorify and praise MY FATHER. Might you "clap", "laugh", "cry" or "encourage" others at your temporal "family reunion"? Some "families" welcome strangers with open arms. Some "families" only "let you in" after they KNOW who and what you are and that you "agree" with their "heritage" and stances on opinions of "the elders of the 'family'". People seldom attend a "family reunion" a second time if they FEEL unwelcomed, unappreciated and ostracized. Now, since a "church" is a "chapter" of the "family of God", what should be our ATTITUDE about "newcomers"? Mary was the only one who was truly blessed in her "worship"

because she SHOWED her gratitude for the personal relationship she had AT THAT MOMENT with her FRIEND, Jesus. Worship time with our “family” will be most useful and bless us most if we can have the ATTITUDE of Mary. Again, in our “times of worship with our friends and family”, OUR ATTITUDE will determine how we relate to others in attendance and to our Lord. Simply put, be a “Mary” instead of any of the other characters in this example. Again, who am I in this passage? Hospitality is nothing more than “making people feel like part of the FAMILY”.