

## eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, May 9, 2010

A Ministry of Christ the Redeemer Church, San Marcos, Texas  
Sixth Sunday of Easter

### **Honor thy father and thy mother**

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:

Acts 16:9-15

Psalm 67

Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5

John 14:23-29

Yes, this is the SIXTH Sunday of Easter and Mothers' Day. All over Christendom, preachers will be dragging out their past sermons and trying to find something new to say about mothers. The "problem" is that there is never too much good to be said for a "good mother" and too much criticism to be voiced for a "bad mother". That "belly button" (whether an "outie" or an "innie") we all possess is ample reminder that each of us, at one time or another, was intimately attached to another person called "mother". It is a cruel reminder of our humanity. Let me be the first to wish you all, Happy Mothers' Day! This applies to all those who ARE or HAVE FUNCTIONED AS mothers to children of all ages whether theirs by biology, adoption or by calling. The true measure of any peoples is how they treat and honor the mothers of their cultures. Mothering is an answer to a calling of God more than a calling of nature. If honest, most mothers, like most fathers, will readily admit that they could have done better at parenting but they did the best they could with what they knew at the time. Such is much of life. There is no higher calling than being a mother. Not all are suited for motherhood (or fatherhood). Not all are suited for being evangelists, preachers, teachers, elders, deacons, or any other "titular" position in a "church". A good mother is more valuable than any preacher or minister I have ever encountered. Not all of us have not had "perfect" mothers but that's the challenge many face. Not every mother gets "perfect" children, either. "Adapting to life" often means that we have to learn to "dance with the one who brung us" if we are to survive with any semblance of sanity. ***"Honor thy father and thy mother for this is the FIRST commandment with promise."*** Those are not my words.

Thanks for all who have responded so graciously to my plea for canes for the "cane-less". Now, I need those in need of a cane to contact me so I can get them into the right hands. Canes get "lost" or "misplaced" all the time so, just because they have one now does not mean they won't need one tomorrow. What need can you and I meet for others this week?

## **Acts 16:9-15**

***During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.***

***We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.***

What is it about nighttime that "visions" usually happen during times when we should be sleeping? Are they "visions" or are they "dreams"? Have you ever had a "dream" so real that it stayed vivid long after waking? Are visions always "positive"? Are "dreams" always pleasant? If you had a "vision", how would you know it was "real"? Macedonia, as a country, still exists. (The lady who owns my favorite local Italian restaurant is Macedonian.) Alexander the Great, son of Phillip the Conqueror, was a Macedonian. Why would Paul have a vision of someone beckoning him to "come over to Macedonia and help us"? Why didn't God just tell the Macedonians about Jesus or send the Holy Spirit to teach them? Was it God's PLAN for Paul? Could it be that God USES US to do what is needed? Was Paul sent to Macedonia because he was requested by the Macedonians? (Remember the question of the Ethiopian eunuch who asked "How can I (learn) unless someone teaches me?") Had they heard of Paul and his great teaching skills? The world was not as "disconnected" in ancient days as we might assume. Archaeologists are constantly finding ties between civilizations long thought to be separated by great distances. (It often takes the U.S. Post Office longer to get a package to me than it might have taken to send it by ship to Macedonia.) I LOVE sailing and sailboats. Luke, a physician and scientist, was obviously Greek and knew something of sailing. Ocean-going boats of the day were either "oared" or "oared and sail-driven". They were incapable of sailing "into the wind" or "close on the wind" because of their rigging. Their taking a "straight" course was primarily due to favorable winds in that part of the Mediterranean at that time of the year. Their ships were mostly lateen-rigged with a sail that could swing as well as being hoisted along a central mast. They could sail pretty close into the wind but they were most efficient when sailing either with the wind behind the beam or at an obtuse angle to the bow. The great advantage of the modern sailing positions with the "sloop" sail

arrangement is that the sail “pulls” the boat through the water (a keel is necessary to allow such sailing positions) using the Bernoulli principle (and stiffening baffles) much like an aircraft wing. The best “ancient boat arrangement” (even today in the mind of some) was the Chinese “junk” and its sail arrangement and “rudder that could be swung up out of the way for shallow draft conditions”. Technology spreads faster than rumors among most people. Younger people may not believe this but, people actually put pen to paper and wrote LETTERS to friends and family in Bible times. In fact, MOST of the New Testament is a collection of personal letters written to people or groups of people. Humans have always stolen technology from other cultures. Why would they not want to hear the “latest” theology from Paul? IF Paul could offer them SALVATION, why would they not want to hear about it as fast as possible? Is this why they sent for the “greatest evangelist of the age”? Had they been praying for God to send them the gospel of salvation?

There is much history hidden in this passage. In Philippi, a leading city of the ancient world, a woman named Lydia was holding “meetings” to worship. People have always found “special places” to worship. Riverbanks are natural places for worship because of the presence of flowing water and water is “life” to humans. The color “purple” was only allowed to be worn by “important people” and it was extracted from a bivalve creature and was very expensive. Since Lydia was a “seller of purple”, we can assume that she was intelligent, talented, hard-working and wealthy. She was also a WOMAN OF INFLUENCE who honored God with her worship. She was a “mother figure” for many in Philippi (named after Philip the Macedon, father of Alexander) even though she was from the smaller town of Thyatira where she probably had her business enterprises. Upon hearing the preaching of Paul (probably a “canned sermon”) she immediately accepted Jesus as Lord and she and her entire “household” were baptized. She then prevailed upon Paul to come and stay in her home as guests. I wonder if she served him “fried chicken” for “Sunday lunch”? Lydia was but one of MANY “mothers” who were cornerstones of the early church and “mothered” a lot of her children in faith. Paul has always gotten a bad ‘rap” for being “misogynist” but, we can assume this was not true because he had so many close relationships to women throughout his travels and teachings. I can picture Paul’s mother making him go to school “at the feet of Gamaliel” in Jerusalem so that he could excel in whatever he chose to do. Yes, even Paul had a mother who loved and encouraged him and WE are the benefactors of that “mothering”. What will we encourage our children to become?

## **Psalm 67 Page 675, BCP**

*Deus misereatur*

1

***May God be merciful to us and bless us, \****

- 2 *show us the light of his countenance and come to us.*
- 3 *Let your ways be known upon earth, \**  
*your saving health among all nations.*
- 4 *Let the peoples praise you, O God; \**  
*let all the peoples praise you.*
- 5 *Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, \**  
*for you judge the peoples with equity*  
*and guide all the nations upon earth.*
- 6 *Let the peoples praise you, O God; \**  
*let all the peoples praise you.*
- 7 *The earth has brought forth her increase; \**  
*may God, our own God, give us his blessing.*
- 8 *May God give us his blessing, \**  
*and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe of him.*

Even the psalmist knew that God was the God of ALL NATIONS. IF we believe that God created all things and that God is no respecter of one created being over another, then, why would he prefer any one nation to another? Is it the attitude of the entire nation or is it the attitude of the LEADERS of the nation that influences God's grace and mercy toward their people? This is a very GOOD reason to pray for our national, state and local leaders. We should pray for wisdom, discernment and humility for ALL our elected officials because their fate is our fate. Pray for the "mothers and fathers" of our nation so that they can rightly teach and direct OUR CHILDREN in the ways of righteousness because it will determine the fate of our nation? Just think about that the next time you think you have nothing about which to pray. I've always had a very LONG prayer list. Thank God for people willing to be "mothers" and "fathers" to teach and encourage our children because they are OUR FUTURE.

### **Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5**

*In the spirit the angel carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will*

***never be shut by day-- and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.***

***Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.***

Once again, I am torn between being “concrete” in my interpretation of this passage from Revelation versus being “contemplative” and poetic. Beware of reading what is not on the page. What is the theme of this passage? Is it that the “Temple” is no more because the Lord is present and a “dwelling place for God’s presence” would be presumptuous and superfluous? Is there no night and no day because “rest” is not needed because we will never be tired? If night is the time of visions, we do not need “night” because we can “see” God continually and KNOW what God wants without visions or dreams? There can be only “one KING” and God is that “one King” so government is passé. (Goody, goody, no more Internal Revenue Service.) Now, THAT will be Heaven for some of us. Basically, everything that we “see” and think important today in our lives will be of no value. God will do away with everything that causes us doubt, fear, anxiety, loss, tears, separation or anything else that keeps our “focus” on anything but God. What do you read from this passage? Does it encourage or discourage you? If you feel hopeful and encouraged, John has been successful in his writing. If this is clear to you after reading this discussion, then, I, too, have been successful, thanks be to our Lord.

### **John 14:23-29**

***Jesus said to Judas (not Iscariot), "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you***

***would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe."***

Attendees to the Sunday class know of my great admiration and love for the Book of John because it is so personal in its conversations between Jesus and individuals. This passage addresses a man named Judas, not Judas Iscariot, who is getting a personal plea from Jesus to remain faithful to the teachings that he had received. Can we be faithful to what we have heard and been taught through scripture? These are words of hope and support given to the obvious concern of a man Jesus encountered. If it makes it even more "personal" to you, try substituting YOUR NAME for Judas' name and see if it makes more sense. Jesus did NOT abandon us. He came, lived among us, taught us how to live in a secular world, suffered as we suffer, lost friends and family, was forsaken, was betrayed and, yet, he prevailed by being resurrected. He did not leave us alone: the Father sent us the Holy Spirit so that we would have a "defense attorney" to advice and counsel us through the hard times, plead our case, explain our true motives and give us courage to maintain our sanity in an insane world. These are words of great hope and love. It is a love letter to us all delivered through Judas via John's gospel. Hear the words, believe them and be encouraged that we are not alone. Our "mother" is still here. The Holy Spirit is always considered to be "feminine" in Latin. One could say that the Holy Spirit is the "mother" portion of God? Therefore, we are born of the flesh with Heavenly parents who will never abandon us. That is good news for each of us this Mothers' Day. It even adds greater credence to the statement "Honor your FATHER and your MOTHER for this is the first commandment with PROMISE." Happy Mothers' Day to each and all who are "mothers" to us all.