

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

June 30, 2019

Proper 8C / Ordinary 13C / Pentecost +6

The readings this week:

- 2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14 ◦ Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20
- Galatians 5:1, 13-25 ◦ Luke 9:51-62

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Face Palm

James and John, the Sons of Zebedee, to Jesus, about the Samaritans:

Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?

I mean...really?

“Jesus, do you want us to burn people alive on your behalf?”

Is that even close to Jesus' M.O.? Jesus, the Prince of Peace...the forgiveness and love-your-neighbor guy?

This is like one of those moments when your crazy uncle says something so ridiculously inappropriate that everyone just turns and stares with their mouth agape for a moment.

The one thing about this passage that makes me giggle though, is thinking about Jesus' facial expression. I wonder if, like a teacher, he kept it together when his students acted out, only to turn away, roll his eyes, and face palm when they weren't looking.

I will have to say, there is something a little cute about it though. They were trying to stick up for Jesus. The Samaritans had rejected him, and they were telling Jesus, however inappropriately, that they had his back.

It reminds me of a time not so long ago that our church grounds committee had painted the word “reserved” on the parking spaces in front of our home. Then a few days later the longest serving member of the parish pulled up in one of those spots to run into the church office for a moment. My youngest daughter, then about four years old, ran outside and yelled “You can't park there! It's reserved!”

Cute, but...a little over the top.

There was also a time when I was a seminarian, and I went on a jihad because women were wearing so much lipstick that it was coming off in chunks on the Communion Chalice. I wanted to make announcements,

write letters for the newsletter, shame people in public...you get the point. My (wonderful) rector very politely heard me out, and then asked my, “What do you feel like you need to defend, and why do you feel like you need to do the defending?”

And, in the case of Jesus, He can take care of himself. That is one of the things that modern Christians forget all the time. We talk about God as if He's omnipotent and omnipresent, but then we act like He's a weakling who can't defend Himself. [click to tweet]

Like God just isn't up for the “War on Christmas.”

He needs some help. From cable-TV-personalities.

No.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit can take care of Himself. God doesn't need us defending Him. He's got it. And, if there's fire and brimstone to be had, then God is more than capable of making that happen.

God certainly desires our devotion, love, and thanks. But, when we trade those in for a crusade...we can all too often end up looking like James and John.

Fools.

~ Rick Morley, [a garden path](#)



“Orpheus and Eurydice” by Auguste Rodin, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo by Rick Morley.

Reflecting on the Word



___ 1st Reading: [2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14](#)

What do you think Elijah was feeling as he made his way toward the river Jordan? What do leaders need today, in the church and in secular settings as well? What do you need to follow God's will for your life? How do you discern what God wills for your life? How do we participate with God in raising up leaders for the church? [Weekly Seeds](#)

___ Psalm Reading: [Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20](#)

Does God so hear our prayers today? How do you know? What is the importance that Asaph cried unto God with his voice? What does Asaph mean when he says that God gave ear unto him? In the day of trouble what did the Psalmist do? Do we do this in the day of our troubles? What is the significance of the use of the name Jehovah in verse 11? To what do you understand the term "wonders" refers? Not only does Asaph remember the works of God, but ponders or meditates on them, what is the significance of this? When do you meditate upon God's works? In what sense is the way of God to be considered in the sanctuary? To what do the wonders or miracles of God always point? When we read that the waters saw God and were afraid, does this mean that the waters could reason and thus be afraid at the presence of God? Why or Why not? What particular comfort is it to know that God leads His people like a flock? [Faith PRC](#)



Praying Toward Sunday

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire for all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this You will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore I will trust You always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone.

~ Thomas Merton 1915-1968, *Thoughts in Solitude*

except through our hospitality

So it is that the love of God, in waiting upon the response of recognition, waits upon its own celebration...

...Thus we may say that the creativity of God is dependent, for the completion and triumph of its work, upon the emergence of a responsive creativity - the creativity of recognition. Recognition is to be understood neither as a single psychological event nor as a state of mind brought about by such an event. It is to be understood as creativity directly and explicitly responsive to the creativity of God. We may say that the response of recognition celebrates the love of God. The final triumph of the love of God is the celebration of His love within that universe which has received that love.

~ W.H. Vanstone 1923-1999, *The Risk of Love*
via Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

___ 3rd Reading: [Galatians 5:1, 13-25](#)

In just a few days, many people in the U.S. will celebrate Independence Day. Why is freedom such an important American value? What are the disadvantages or dangers inherent in freedom? What do you think Paul means in verse 1: "For freedom Christ has set us free." What else might we think freedom is for? Why does Paul say the Galatian Christians should not use their freedom to return to following The Law? What do you think Paul means by "faith working through love?" In what ways could we use our freedom in Christ to go back to sinful things? In what sense has Christ freed us from the urges of our human nature? Summarize Paul's argument – what is the best way to use this freedom we've been given? It is often said that freedom has two meanings – to be "free from" something, and to be "free to" do something. In what ways do we enjoy these freedoms as Christians? [Faith Element](#)

___ 4th Reading: [Luke 9:51-62](#)

What resistance did Jesus meet at this point on His travels and why? Why did Jesus rebuke James and John? What about their perspective on the kingdom of God was Jesus challenging? What did Jesus mean when He said, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head?" What is the implication for those who want to follow Christ today? How did Jesus' response remind those present of the priority of true discipleship? What are some things in life that distract us from serving or following Christ? When we give into our distractions, what are we saying about following Jesus? What are examples in your life when you've told God "first let me go do this"? [Pine Lake Church](#)