

Reflections for the
Second Week of Lent



March 4, 2007

To

March 10, 2007

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Welcome to Daily Lenten Scripture Reflections. This is the print version of my online blog. I am making this copy available for those that do not have internet access. The Reflections will be created in six weekly booklets. Please be sure that you get a new booklet each week. Better yet, visit my blog:

<http://revtdg.wordpress.com>

On the blog you can read these same reflections and offer your comments upon them.

I also appreciate you comments in other forms. Give me a call or drop me a note and let me know if these reflections have helped focus your thoughts during this season of Lent.

Second Sunday During Lent

Sunday March 4, 2007

A Sense of Determination

Daily Lectionary Reading

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalms 27

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Luke 13:31-35

Luke 13:31-35

Jesus' Sorrow for Jerusalem

31At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

32He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' 33In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

34"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 35Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'[a]"

Most folks, when they get a death threat against them tend to take it seriously. Especially when it comes from the ruler of the land. Jesus, though, didn't heed the advice of the Pharisees. I find it interesting that Luke has the Pharisees coming to warn Jesus. Apparently, he was making some inroads into their spiritual lives with his messages. Unfortu-

nately, his answer indicates that, once again, he is on track to accept his fate. As Luke stated earlier, he has "turned his face" toward Jerusalem. Jesus knows that the culmination of God's plan would be found in the holy city. Nothing, not even the death threats of a tyrannical king would stop him from achieving his mission.

The way I see it, most of us lack Jesus' sense of determination. He knew where he was going and he knew that he must travel that route no matter what might come his way. Few of us know the way that God is leading us and even fewer of us have the determination to stick it out to the end to arrive at the place God wants us to be.

Prayer: Lord, as we continue to journey with Jesus during Lent, help us become clearer about your plan for our lives and more determined to see it through to the end.

Monday March 5, 2007

A Lesson in Harvesting

Daily Lectionary Reading

Psalm 56

Jeremiah 1:11-19

Romans 1:1-15

John 4:27-42

John 4:27-42

The Disciples Rejoin Jesus

27Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

28Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,

29"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ[a]?" 30They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

31Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

32But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

33Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

34"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 35Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. 37Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 38I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

Many Samaritans Believe

39Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." 40So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41And because of his words many more became believers.

42They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

It didn't take the Samaritan woman long to become a proclaimer of the word. She took off and began telling fellow Samaritans about the man that she thought to be the Christ. John's Gospel is clear that many of those that deliver the message are often people that would not have been the most likely candidates. Again, we have to consider that the Samaritan was a woman--what self respecting man of that day would

listen to the ramblings of a woman! Yet, something about her urgency or the convincing tone of her message made them want to come and see for themselves. A crowd approaches Jesus and convinces him to stay for two extra days in Samaria! He proclaims the Good News to them and they believe. Or to put it in their own words, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know this man really is the Savior of the world."

I think this passage tells us a lot about the way the Gospel is proclaimed. Someone hears about the Good News and become a believer. That person is full of energy and enthusiasm. He or she then goes and tells others about Jesus. But note that the final conversion of faith does not come solely based on the words of the person presenting the message. They present, but God convicts the heart and mind of those that hear the message. Put another way, we plant the seeds, but God causes them to grow and presents the harvest for reaping.

I can still remember my early days as a believer. I remember the believer. I remember the fire and the enthusiasm that burned within me. There is still a glowing ember inside of me waiting to be fanned to life, but the enthusiasm and waned with time. I think that this is so for most Christians. What we need is to once again fan into a burning flame the faith that resides within us. The harvest is ripe for the taking and God needs us to go into the fields for the Kingdom's sake.

PRAYER: Lord, light a fire within me and send me into your fields to help reap the harvest.



Tuesday March 6, 2007

Following Orders

Daily Lectionary Reading

Psalm 61

Jeremiah 2:1-13

Romans 1:16-25

John 4:43-54

John 4:43-54

Jesus Heals the Official's Son

43After the two days he left for Galilee. 44(Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) 45When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there.

46Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. 47When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

48"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

49The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

50Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live."

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. 51While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. 52When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour."

53Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed.

54This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.

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John likes signs and wonders. Here we see the second sign. Jesus heals a child from a distance. The royal official that came to Jesus was looking for an answer. He was also probably quite used to have people obey him. His pleading command to Jesus was "Come and heal my son." Note, though, that Jesus did not do precisely what the man wanted. He did not go. He simply said, "You may go. Your son will live." It's a dismissive sort of comment. One note likely to be appreciated by someone from a royal court. After all, the man surely was good at making such dismissive comments himself. Now the tables were turned. Something within him did what he was told rather than stand around arguing. His obedience paid off in a big way. On the way back to his son he encountered servants that told him that his son had been cured at the very hour Jesus had spoken. His faith and the miracle of healing were all that were needed. He and all his household became believers.

I sometimes wonder about how we seek answers to our problems from Jesus. It's not like we can track him down and confront him and beg him in person. It's not like we can hear him say, "Go on your way. What you have asked for has been done." It's not like these things can happen in our lives today--or is it. As I understand it, Jesus is more accessible to us now than he was to the people of his day. We don't have to track him down. The Scripture tells us that we are the Temple within which his Holy Spirit abides. He is within us and he hears our prayers and he answers them. Not always in the way we want them answered, but he does answer. Our problem is, we have a difficult time hearing that voice and an even more difficult time heeding what the Spirit is telling us to do.

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PRAYER: Lord, thank you for your presence with us 24/7/365. As we call out to you, give us ears to hear your response and heart open to doing what you ask us to do.

Wednesday March 7, 2007

A Friend in Faith

Daily Lectionary Readings

Psalm 72

Jeremiah 3:6-18

Romans 1:28-2:11

John 5:1-18

John 5:1-18

The Healing at the Pool

1Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. 2Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda[a] and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.[b] 5One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

7"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

8Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." 9At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."

11But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.' "

12So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?"

13The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had

slipped away into the crowd that was there.

14Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." 15The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Life Through the Son

16So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. 17Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." 18For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

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Here we encounter a man that has faith. For 38 years he has lain next to the pool. He was waiting for the waters to stir. He knew that when they did stir all he had to do was to be the first one into the pool. This was a man of faith. He was sure that if he could get there he would be cured. Else, why would he have lain there for all those years. One day and unnamed man comes to him and asks simply, "Do you want to be made well?" I suppose the man could have been flippant and said, "Why else do you think I'm hanging around this pool!" But, instead he said "Sir, I have no one to help me when the water is stirred." I suppose in his heart of hearts, this man thought that Jesus might volunteer to stay around and help him the next time the water was stirred. Jesus, however, had other plans, "Pick up your mat and walk." The man picked up his mat and walked. Jesus slipped back into the anonymity of the crowd.

I suppose that what this passage says most to me is the role that faith plays in our lives. It is important to have faith. It is important to believe that God is able to use us and to reach out to us. I think it shows something even more important than faith--a friend in the faith that will come along side you and help you when things are down. The man at the pool had faith. What he didn't have was a friend in faith that would

be there when he needed help putting his faith into action and getting into the water.

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PRAYER-- Lord, help me to have faith but more importantly, help me to become and friend in faith to someone today.

Thursday March 8, 2007

Jesus Knew God's Plan

Daily Lectionary Readings

Psalm 70

Jeremiah 4:9-10, 19-28

Romans 2:12-24

John 5:19-29

John 5:19-29

19Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. 20For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. 21For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. 22Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 23that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

24"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. 25I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. 26For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. 27And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

28" Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

We move from an action passage in which people and places and things are happening to a discourse passage in which Jesus is trying to explain something. Here are some points from the talk to ponder:

- Jesus does only what he sees the Father doing.
- God raises the dead and gives life and Jesus can give life.
- The Father does not judge--Jesus will judge.
- If you hear and believe Jesus' word and in the God who sent him, you will have eternal life.
- Even the dead will one day hear God's message and rise to judgment.

This is one of the first times in John's Gospel that we see some of the detail in the relationship between Jesus and God. We have seen God's approval of the Son at the Baptism in the Jordan. Here, though, we can begin to understand some of the complexity of the relationship between God and Jesus.

PRAYER -- Lord, help me to understand who God is as I seek to follow you. Help God's plan to become my plan and the things I say and do, be the things God would desire.



Friday March 9, 2007
On What Do You Base Your Faith?

Daily Lectionary Reading

Psalm 69

Jeremiah 5:1-9

Romans 2:25-3:18

John 5:30-47

John 5:30-47

30By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

Testimonies About Jesus

31"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. 32There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid.

33"You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. 34Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved.

35John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.

36"I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. 37And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, 38nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. 39You diligently study[a] the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

41"I do not accept praise from men, 42but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. 43I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. 44How can you believe if you accept praise

from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God**[b]**?

45"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. 46If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

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The discourse continues as Jesus talks about those things that testify about him. He begins with John the Baptist and the witness he made about the one that was coming. He then points out the very work that he is doing as a form of testimony. In other words, this is not the path I would have chosen on my own. I know where it leads and it is of God's doing--not my own. He then testifies about the Scriptures. He asserts that even though God's word is in them, that in itself cannot give them eternal life. After all, the Scripture attest to Jesus' role in God's plan. Thus, followers of the Scripture need to turn toward the one that the Scriptures talk about! Finally, he asserts the witness of Moses. Moses was the giver of the law and the people had their hearts set on following the law. Yet, if they truly understood Moses then they would understand that Moses was writing about Jesus.

I think that there are a lot of people in our day and time that just don't see the testimony that exists surrounding Jesus. We turn our back on the plain words of the Scripture. We ignore the rich tradition of the faith. We ignore the reasonableness of the Christian faith and we say that what we experience is more important than Scripture, tradition or reason. Ours is a me first generation that seeks ultimate fulfillment in so many different ways. Some are hedonists. Some are capitalists. Some are socialists. Some are secularists. Some are humanists. What we need more of are believers that have put their trust and faith not in themselves or some system--but in Jesus Christ the one that died on the cross for their sins.

PRAYER -- Lord, whatever testimony I have heard about Jesus, let it resonate with my soul so that I can come to believe.

Saturday March 10, 2007

Is Jesus Watching Us?

Daily Lectionary Reading

Psalm 75

Jeremiah 5:20-31

Romans 3:19-31

John 7:1-13

John 7:1-13

Jesus Goes to the Feast of Tabernacles

1After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. 2But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, 3Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. 4No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." 5For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

6Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. 7The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. 8You go to the Feast. I am not yet[a] going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come." 9Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.

10However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. 11Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, "Where is that man?"

12Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man."

Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." 13But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

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Jesus has been at it long enough to create some enemies. At one point

Herod wanted him dead. Now the Jews want him dead. His close followers, though, sensed that he was having a public relations problem. The only folks seeing his miracles were those in the outlying regions. They counseled him to head into Judea so that other disciples could see his miracles and he could increase his public appeal. There words, "No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret," gave away their true thoughts on this matter. Jesus though, keeps his own counsel. He knows that the time is not right for a public showing. He sends them onward to the feast and stayed behind.

Once they had gone on ahead. He trailed along behind them by himself. They drew the attention in Judea and he got to judge the crowd by being a part of the crowd. In the crowd he hears good things about himself and also people that called him a deceiver. But no one was willing to take a public stand on his behalf.

This sure sounds a lot like a politician and his advisers at work to me. Testing the waters and seeing if the trial balloon would fly or fall. Yet, I think it also has to be about more than just politics. It seems as if Jesus is resolute about his game plan. He knows that one day he will make a quite public statement. Now, though, there is just murmurs and rumors. I often wonder, "Was Jesus following the disciples to see what they were saying and doing on his behalf?" The Scriptures make it clear "...no one would say anything publicly.." Did that include the followers that had gone on ahead of him?

I sometimes wonder, "Does Jesus trail along behind us and see what we are saying and doing on his behalf?"

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PRAYER - Lord, if you are watching us. Then please forgive us and give us the strength to be a strong public witness on behalf of your Kingdom.

