

August 12, 2007 | Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lectionary citations

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20 with Psalm 50:1-8,22-23

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 *and* Luke 12:32-40

Listen to the Word of God from the Inclusive Language
Lectionary.

Our reading from the Hebrew Prophets is from Isaiah, chapter one, verses 10-20. With powerful words and images the Prophet reminds the people that we cannot separate our ritual worship life from how we organize society and live our daily lives. Justice and Spirituality cannot be separated for a people who have faith in the living God.

Isaiah 1: 10-20

Hear the word of God, you rulers! Listen to the teaching of our God, you people! What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says God; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation— I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now, let us argue it out, says God: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of God has spoken.

Our Epistle reading is from the Letter to the Hebrews. It is one of the most well know texts in the Christian scriptures on faith. The Reading is from chapter 11, verses 1-3 and 8-16.

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abraham and Sarah obeyed when they were called to set out for a place that they was to receive as an inheritance; and they set out, not knowing where they were going. By faith they stayed for a time in the land they had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, who were heirs with them of the same promise. For they looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith they received power of procreation, even though they was too

old—and Sarah herself was barren—because they considered faithful the One who had promised. Therefore from Abraham and Sarah, who were as good as dead, descendants were born, 'as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.'

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, God has prepared a city for them.

Our Gospel reading is from Luke. Jesus continues teachings about the alternative economics of the Realm of God and how our relationship to possessions is essential to our being ready open to encounter the incarnation of Christ in the midst of a crucified world.

Luke 12:32-40

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Creator's good pleasure to give you the kin-dom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ***For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*** "Be dressed for action and have your

lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for the master as soon as the master comes and knocks. Blessed are those whom the master finds alert; truly I tell you, the master will... have them sit down to eat... and serve them. If the master comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are they. "But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, the owner would not have let the house be broken into. ***You also must be ready, for the Human One is coming at an unexpected hour.***"

Let us pray.... We are grateful God for your Word that can help us know you more fully and more deeply. Open our hearts, minds and imaginations. Let there be space there for your spirit to enter. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts and minds be acceptable in Thy sight. **AMEN**

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.

As the Jesus movement was an anti-imperialist movement – a movement that challenges all systems of domination and subjugation. And as the rich and powerful don't appreciate their privilege being challenged, the Jesus movement was suppressed. Jesus was executed as were many of his followers. Yet, despite the repression, the movement continued to grow and expand throughout the empire. The

Letter to the Hebrews, like most of the Epistles, is a part of an ongoing conversation and dialogue within the Jesus movement during the first couple of generations after Jesus' death. They give encouragement and exploring how to follow the Way of Jesus and live into the Realm of God that Jesus gave us a glimpse of, even in difficult and trying times.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews is reminding a community that is being persecuted for Following the Way of Jesus that their Faith is the assurance that the Realm of God that they hope for is a reality. Their faith is the knowing that the Realm of God that they hope for is a reality. Their faith is the realization of the Realm of God that they hope for. Their faith is the incarnation of the Realm of God that they hope for.

Even if when you look at the world around you, you see suffering, repression, injustice, violence – your faith is the conviction in the reality of the Love, Peace and Justice of God's realm.

Our lived faith in community has allowed us to understand, to know, that we stand on the shoulders of the faithful cloud of witnesses that has gone before us. They have given us brief glimpses of God's realm, the new Jerusalem, the City of God. Their faithful living has made what is invisible seen.

Even though they have all died without the fullness of God's Realm being incarnate on earth as it is in heave, their faithful living allowed them to see it from a distance and to join with God in creating it.

They knew and proclaimed that they were strangers and foreigners in the world of empire and domination. They made it clear in word and action that they were seeking a new world.

They desired a better world, that is, a world where God's Realm is on earth as it is in heaven.

Pause

Whose shoulders do you stand on? Whose faithful life has shown you that another world is possible? Whose faithful life has empowered you to take another step on your journey of faith? If she can live faithfully, maybe I can too? Maybe the love and joy that they live could be mine. Maybe the freedom that allows them to live without being prisoners of fear could be a reality in my life.

Have any of you had a chance to read Gerald's email sent yesterday entitled, "I Go Humble; Reflections on Service with Christian Peacemaker Teams"? If you haven't, please do. It is quite moving. Gerald beautifully talks about his journey of faith and the shoulders of all those faithful people that he stands upon.

Gerald writes: "Every aspect of this process reminds me of my reliance on community, of my incredible great fortune to have so many mentors and supporters and the honor to serve with highly skilled activists for whom exhibiting bravery and self sacrifice comes as naturally as breathing.... Without my family and my Wellington, Voices for Creative Non-Violence and CPT communities, I would not have become the person that I am today. Your nurture, acceptance and encouragement helped me realize potential that I only dreamed of in the past. Of course, I know I am still a work in progress. Realizing *that* truth is part of what belonging to our communities has taught me. Thank you for the benefit of a safe place to test and develop my skills and for the honest, constructive criticism I

have received when needed. All this, and the example of so many I see truly living their faith and principles in action have laid the emotional and spiritual foundation that gives me stability to be useful to CPT.”

AMEN!

Gerald’s letter is a part of our ongoing conversation and dialogue to give encouragement and explore how to follow the Way of Jesus and live into the Realm of God that Jesus gave us a glimpse of, even in the difficult and trying times we live in.

During the collapse of the US Imperil project this ongoing conversation and dialogue of encouragement and creative imagination, I believe, is absolutely essential if our faith is to be the realization of what we hope for.

(If time permits: tell the story of Grandfather Alfred and Grandmother Jenny)

Sisters and Brothers let us not be afraid, for it is our Creator's good pleasure to give us the kin-dom of God. Let us live simple that others may simply live. Let us serve the poor and vulnerable. Let us live our faith so that the Realm of God becomes more and more visible. And let us open our hearts and minds, create space and pay attention so that we will be ready, to encounter the Human One who comes at the unexpected times and in the unexpected ways.

AMEN