

Proper 8



Prayer of the Day

O God, you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Kings 19:15-16, 19-21

{15} Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. {16} Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. {19} So he set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. {20} He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." Then Elijah said to him, "Go back again; for what have I done to you?" {21} He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

15. the Lord said to him: Elijah. The Elijah cycle, 1 Kings 17:1-19:21; 21:1-29; 2 Kings 1:1-2:8; 13:14-21, includes this pericope which deals with the call of Elisha.

you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram: [1] It was Elisha who told Hazael that he would succeed Ben Hadad of Aram in Damascus (2 Kings 8:13). Elisha also anointed Jehu as King of Israel in place of Ahab.

16. you shall anoint Elisha as prophet in your place: This is the only case of when a prophet receives his authority and power by anointing. It is also the only case where a biblical prophet appoints his successor, as far as I know.

[17-18: The omitted verses describe the completeness of the destruction wrought by Hazael and Jehu, and note that there will still be seven thousand who "have not bowed to Baal."]

19. Elijah threw his mantle over him: Instead of anointing Elisha, Elijah confers prophetic authority on Elisha by covering him with his mantle. The mantle carried Elijah's charisma, and when it covered Elisha it imbued him with Elijah's power.

20-21. Let me kiss my father and my mother. Elijah said to him: Go back again: The usual interpretation of this exchange is that Elisha is not ready to drop everything to follow the prophet, and that Elijah wants nothing to do with disciples who are not completely focused on their task. Francis Beare offers a different interpretation: "Elijah permits his disciple to say his farewells and even to offer a banquet to his friends." [2]

Psalm 16

{1} Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. {2} I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." {3} As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight. {4} Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips. {5} The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. {6} The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage. {7} I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. {8} I keep the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. {9} Therefore my heart is glad, and

my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. {10} For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit. {11} You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

3. *the holy ones in the land*: "The Levitical priests are the saints, because Yahweh is in their midst (Num. 16:3). In this case we would have to translate the saints on earth, for we would have to think of the terrestrial counterpart of the heavenly beings who surround and serve Yahweh." [3]

4. *their drink offerings of blood*: In the sacrificial worship of Israel there were no drink offerings of blood, so they are the offerings of a foreign cultus that the priest-psalmist has turned away from the Temple. In Israel blood was the carrier of life, and life belonged to Yahweh, so human beings were forbidden to drink blood (Genesis 9:4).

take their names upon my lips: The psalmist will not even say the names of the other gods.

5. *my chosen portion my lot boundary lines heritage*: These words are appropriate to the distribution of land. "In Israel the land was assigned to the tribes in a sacral act of distribution by lot. Only Levi was exempt from this process of land distribution." Levi had no land, instead Yahweh was her portion, lot, and heritage (Deuteronomy 10:9; Joshua 13:14; Numbers 18:20).

9. *my heart is glad my soul rejoices my body also rests secure*: This reflects the three components of the Israelite understanding of human nature, body, soul, spirit, and simply means the whole person. The same psychology is present in the admonition to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

10. *Sheol the Pit*: The underworld, the grave. Israel's horror of death and its associations was absolute. One became "unclean," that is, ritually disabled, by any association with death, even having one's shadow fall on a place where a body was buried even though no one knew it was there. The priest-psalmist is particularly thankful that Yahweh has preserved him/her from ritual uncleanness.

11. *the path of life your presence your right hand*: "The closing verse speaks of the bliss of the nearness to God, which in the midst of death opens up a way of life, on which one may walk with joy." [4]

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

{1} For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. {13} For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. {14} For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." {15} If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. {16} Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. {17} For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. {18} But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. {19} Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, {20} idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, {21} envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. {22} By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. {24} And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. {25} If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

1. *freedom*: The freedom Paul speaks of is not a freedom we have won for ourselves, an

absolute freedom to choose what we want, freedom from obligation. It is God's gift, freedom from the elemental spirits of the universe including our own human nature, freedom to be who and what God created us to be, and to live as he wills us to live.

13-24: These verses are a warning against submitting again to a yoke of slavery to self-indulgence. Through our freedom in Christ we become slaves to one another, and bear the fruit of the spirit rather than the desires and works of the flesh. We have "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires," and now being guided by the Spirit, we "live by the Spirit."

14. The whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself": From Leviticus 19:18; the passage is quoted in Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31; Galatians 5:14; Romans 13:9; James 2:8, and the idea is throughout the Johannine literature. Originally, the "neighbor" meant a fellow countryman. [5] "Paul's interpretation is spelled out clearly at the end of the section in 6:10: "let us do good to all men, but especially those who belong to the household of the faith." [6] But while a different group is implied the "neighbor" is still someone like one's self. Love is still not seen as universal. The Galatian Christians are to treat each other with love and not attack each other.

17. what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh: "In Galatians the flesh is the active power which generates the desires. The human body is a battlefield on which the powers of the flesh and the Spirit fight against each other." [7]

18. if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law: A different statement of the same principle advanced in verse 1. And the same caution is applicable: "do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves of one another."

19-23: The catalogues of vices and virtues probably had their origin in early baptismal, catechetical instruction. "It seems intentional that the catalogue of vices contains a chaotic assemblage of concepts, while the catalogue of virtues is well ordered; thus the catalogues represent the dualism between the chaotic multitude of evils and the unity of the Spirit." [8]

24. crucified: See Galatians 2:19-20. "the flesh has a powerful life of its own which expresses itself in its passions and desires. Crucifixion of the flesh results in its neutralization: having lost its life it is no longer capable of producing the works of the flesh." [9]

Luke 9:51-62

{51} When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. {52} And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; {53} but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. {54} When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" {55} But he turned and rebuked them. {56} Then they went on to another village. {57} As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." {58} And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." {59} To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." {60} But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." {61} Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." {62} Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

"An important new section of the Lucan Gospel begins at 9:51, the so-called travel account. Since the end of his little interpolation (6:20-8:3), Luke has been following Mark's sequence: 8:4-9:50 = Mark 4:1-9:40. Now he omits 9:41-10:12, which is the so-

called Little Omission, but he will use forms of 9:42-50 later in the travel account (17:1-3, 14:34-35)." [10]

51. *to be taken up*: In the Transfiguration narrative there was talk about "his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). Here Luke uses another idiom to refer to Jesus immanent Passion. The same verb, *analambano*, is used in Acts 1:2 with reference to the Ascension.

53. *they did not receive him because his face was set toward Jerusalem*: This is the first show of opposition to Jesus as he travels toward Jerusalem. It reflects of the struggle between the Samaritans and the Judeans over the proper location of the Temple.

54. *Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?*: A clear reference to 2 Kings 1:2-12 which tells how Elijah called down heavenly fire to consume the messengers of Ahaziah, king of Samaria, sent to inquire of Baal-zebub, the God of Akron, slighting Yahweh. An ancient gloss adds "as Elijah did" to the verse, to make the reference specific. Jesus rebuked them (verse 55), refusing to engage in retaliation even against those who were hostile to him.

57-62: Three individuals attempt to join Jesus following, one at his invitation (vs. 59), but in each case they are unsuited. "Following Jesus means devotion to kingdom-work and transcends even ordinary family affection. Thus, the following of Jesus does not simply mean imitation of him, but entering into the very conditions of his life, ministry, and lot." [11]

Reflection

The connection between the first lesson and the Gospel is two-fold. First, in the Gospel James and John ask if Jesus wants them to repeat Elijah's calling down of fire on Samaritans because of their slighting of Yahweh. Second, there are similarities between the call of Elisha in the first lesson and the non-calls of disciples by Jesus as he travels to Jerusalem to be "taken up," culminating in his observation, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Hymns [12]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

662v --II--Restore in Us
377 --G--Lift High the
487 --G--Let Us Ever
383, 495, 501, 392

472/3 --E--Come, Holy Ghost,
283 --D--O God, Send
486 --II--Spirit of God,
284 --II--Creator Spirit,
Heavenly

Prayers of the People [13]

P or A: We pray that you would send us your Spirit, Lord, and respond, "Come, Holy Spirit."

A: For friendships, that we might be to our friends and find in our friends a haven of comfort, reassurance, and source of renewal in our often stressful lives. Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For your great and mighty works of creation extolled in the Psalms, that they may speak

to us of the rightful place of humility. Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For the fruit of the Spirit--love, joy, peace, patience, kindness--that it may be evident in our lives, nourishing our own souls and the souls of others with goodness. Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For the sick, the shut-in, and the dying, that you would give them the light of your hope. We pray especially for _____ and all those whom we name in our hearts... . Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For the courage to accept the challenge of the gospel--to leave all comforts and familiar things to follow the path of Christ. Let us know that you are always there to guide us. Send your Spirit, Lord. Come...

P: We pray in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Or [14]

Presider or deacon

Called to follow Jesus, let us offer prayers for all peoples.

Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering and for the people of God in every place.

For all peoples and their leaders.

For freedom and justice throughout the world.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, the afflicted and the oppressed, and those who have left their homeland.

For those who have died in the flesh.

For ourselves, our families and companions, and all those we love.

Lifting our voices with all creation, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

God of the prophets, hear the prayers we offer this day and make us strong to follow Jesus, no matter what the cost and hardship, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

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[1] John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970, p.410.

[2] Francis Wright Beare, *The Earliest Records of Jesus*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962, p. 154.

[3] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988, p. 236.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[5] Martin Noth, *Leviticus: A Commentary*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1965, p. 141.

[6] Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979, p. 276.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 279-281.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 290.

[10] Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981, vol. 1, pp. 823.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 834.

[12] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc0001.txt>

[13] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_c.txt

[14] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>