

Hear what the Spirit is saying

Sunday Morning at St. Hugh's in Idyllwild, California

August 9, 2020 | Pentecost +10

Collect for Proper 14

Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live according to your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.** ~BCP 232

1 Kings 19:9-18 NRSV

The reading from the Hebrew Bible tells how God is made known to Elijah—not in wind, earthquake, or fire—but in a still small voice. In a mood of depression the prophet retreats to Mount Horeb. But the Lord gives him a new mission and a promise that there will be a remnant in Israel who will not worship the false god Baal. Although God is known in a word of revelation rather than in the awesome events of nature, these happenings can also be seen as harbingers of God's presence.

⁹ At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

¹¹ He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁴ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

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. ¹⁷ Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. ¹⁸ Yet I will

leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

Romans 10:5-15 NRSV

In this lesson Paul teaches that the word of faith is a gift; by it we make our saving confession that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. Without God's grace the way of righteousness would be impossibly distant. But the faith that leads to righteousness is in our hearts and the confession of salvation is on our lips. This is true for all people, no matter what their background, and so it is essential that the Good News be carried far and wide, that all may call upon the name of the Lord.

⁵ Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that “the person who does these things will live by them.” ⁶ But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say?

“The word is near you,
on your lips and in your heart”

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. ¹¹ The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. ¹³ For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

¹⁴ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? ¹⁵ And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Matthew 14:13-21 NRSV

The gospel is the story of Jesus' walking on the water and his rescue of Peter after his faith fails him. The narrative has several levels of meaning. In legendary terms Jesus is like the Creator God who strides over the watery chaos monster. Matthew's gospel stresses this revelation of Jesus' close relationship with God, as God's Son, and the importance of faith on the part of the disciples. A church beset by its own problems and lack of faith would be glad to perceive in this story the saving presence of its risen Lord.

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had

dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸ Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Psalm 85:8-13 BCP 709

The psalmist both celebrates and prays for the Lord's gracious favor, forgiveness, deliverance, and justice.

- 8 I will listen to what the Lord God is saying, *
 for he is speaking peace to his faithful people
 and to those who turn their hearts to him.
- 9 Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him, *
 that his glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Mercy and truth have met together; *
 righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- 11 Truth shall spring up from the earth, *
 and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
- 12 The Lord will indeed grant prosperity, *
 and our land will yield its increase.
- 13 Righteousness shall go before him, *
 and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.

...when Peter noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Matthew 14:30-32



The Gospel story for this Sunday lends itself to reading the Bible as Jesus did. Intrigued? Read on. ~Fr. Dan

Midrash

The best way in which a Christian can interpret Scripture is to do so as Jesus did! It almost sounds too simple, doesn't it? Yet, ironically, this has not been the norm for most of Christianity. So, what does it mean to read the Bible as Jesus did?

Jesus approached the Hebrew Scriptures with the assumption that God had been dialoging with humanity since the beginning. He used the Jewish practice of midrash as a way of participating in this dialogue. Midrash is a method of interpreting Scripture that fills in the gaps, by questioning and imagining a multitude of possible interpretations. Midrash allows the text and the Spirit of God to open up the reader to transformation, instead of resisting change by latching onto one final, closed, and certain interpretation. This open-horizon approach was common for most of the first 1300 years of Christianity, where as many as six levels of interpretation and numerous levels of truth were perceived in any one Scripture text.

The traditional forms of midrash demand both a prayerful approach and scholarly familiarity with the Bible and commentaries which have formed the tradition over the centuries. However, it is possible for someone who is not a biblical scholar or theologian to get a sense of the practice of midrash.

The following practice, drawn from Teresa Blythe's book *50 Ways to Pray*, offers an interactive experience with the Bible through openness, contemplative attitude, and critical thinking. This practice invites us to trust that God will meet us where we are and will take us where we need

to go as we consider the meaning of the text. We could engage in this dialogue often, even with the same text, since there will always be more discoveries about the meaning(s) of sacred texts.

Dialoguing with Scripture:

Choose one of the following Scriptures for reflection:

Choose **Matthew 14:22-33** (or one of Richard Rohr's suggestions here)

- Exodus 1:8-22 — The Hebrew midwives fear God
- Exodus 18:13-27 — Jethro's advice to Moses
- 1 Samuel 3 — The call of Samuel
- Mark 9:14-29 — Jesus heals the afflicted boy
- Luke 8:22-25 — Jesus calms a storm (see p. 6 of handout)
- Luke 10:29-37 — The good Samaritan

Read (or listen to) your selected Scripture passage slowly. You may want to read (or hear) it more than once.

Consider which character in the story you would like to interact with. It could be a person you find agreeable, or a person with whom you want to question or debate. Who are you drawn to? When you decide on a character, write the name at the top [of a piece of] paper.

Hold an imaginary conversation—on paper—with the character in the story. You may want to stick with the theme of the Scripture and talk about that, or you may want to discuss other topics. It is completely up to you. Let your imagination roll free and see what transpires. (20 minutes)

When you are finished, read your dialogue out loud.

What is it like to have a conversation with a biblical figure? Why did you choose the character you chose? Did anything in the conversation surprise you? Did anything in the conversation move you? Did you feel any inner blocks to doing this sort of exercise? Did you feel the presence and guidance of God in the dialogue? What did you learn about yourself as you engaged this biblical figure? How easy or difficult is it for you to have these kinds of imaginary conversations? How useful would you say such conversations are for you?

End your reflection time with a prayer of gratitude for what you experienced.

Tip—You don't have to be an excellent writer to enjoy this exercise. No one but you has to read what you've written. Just write from the heart and imagination. [1]

Source: Daily Email Meditation from Richard Rohr. Richard Rohr Meditation: Church: Old and New: Weekly Summary on November 1, 2019.

[1] Teresa A. Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray: Practices from Many Traditions and Times* (Abingdon Press: 2006), 17-18.

Jesus Calms a Storm
(Mt 8:23-27; Mk 4:35-41)

²² One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side of the lake.” So they put out, 23 and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. ²⁴ They went to him and woke him up, shouting, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵ He said to them, “Where is your faith?” They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, “Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?”

PRECIOUS LORD, TAKE MY HAND
Thomas A. Dorsey, 1899–1993

This will be our closing hymn in Sunday's Service of Readings & Prayer. ~Fr. Dan

For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand
and says to you, “Do not fear; I will help you.” (Isaiah 41:13)

Out of a broken heart after his wife and newly born son had both died, Thomas Dorsey cried to his Lord to lead him “through the storm, through the night” In doing so, he created lines that have since ministered to others in an unusual way. This tender song, written by a black gospel musician in 1932, has since been a favorite with Christians everywhere.

Thomas A. Dorsey grew up in Georgia as a “preacher’s kid.” As he began to be successful as a composer of jazz and blues songs, however, he drifted away from God. After it seemed to him that he was miraculously spared in brushes with death, Dorsey came back to the Lord. As his life dramatically changed he began to write gospel songs and to sing in church services. It was during a revival meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, that he received a telegram telling the tragic news of his wife and infant son. Stunned and grief-stricken, Dorsey cried, “God, you aren’t worth a dime to me right now!”

A few weeks later, however, as Dorsey fingered the keyboard of a piano, he created the lines of “Precious Lord” to fit a tune that was familiar to him. The following Sunday the choir of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in South Chicago, Illinois, sang the new song with Dorsey playing the accompaniment. “It tore up the church!”

God continued to lead Thomas Dorsey by the hand until he had written more than 250 gospel songs. He once stated:

“My business is to try to bring people to Christ instead of leaving them where they are. I write for all of God’s people. All people are my people. What I share with people is love. I try to lift their spirits and let them know that God still loves them. He’s still saving, and He can still give that power.”

Kenneth W. Osbeck, *Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 260

WONDER LOVE AND PRAISE #800
Precious Lord, take my hand

1

Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; through the storm,
through the night, lead me on to the light,
take my hand, precious Lord, lead me on.

2

When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near,
when my life is almost gone; hear my cry,
hear my call, hold my hand, lest I fall,
take my hand, precious Lord, lead me on.

3

When the darkness appears and the night draws near,
and the day is past and gone;
at the river I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand,
take my hand, precious Lord, lead me on.