

Weekly Rhythm

Thinking more about the readings –
their context and how they might help us lead transformed lives.

Readings and comments this week are all thanks to www.gbod.com

[Exodus 1:8-2:10.](#)

“The story begins with subversion! Note who the powerful actors are and are not. Midwives and daughters overcome the reactionary and murderous behavior of the most powerful men in Egypt. Their resistance preserves the life not only of Moses but of many other male children as well. The result is a total backfiring of the Pharaoh’s plan to reduce the Hebrew population. Instead, their population multiplies! And one of their own comes to be the adopted son of the Pharaoh’s daughter!

Life and compassion trump fear and oppression. Midwives defy rules. Daughters save a doomed brother. The Pharaoh’s daughter takes in an orphan floating in the river, and his real mother is hired as his wet nurse.”

What does this tell us about who the important players are in our context today?
Can “small” actions lead to big results?

[Psalm 124.](#) A victory over persecution is celebrated. Note verse 8, a common statement of faith in the name (presence) of God.

[Romans 12:1-8.](#)

Against the backdrop of their mixed Jewish-Gentile community, Paul calls the Christians at Rome to offer themselves fully to God with minds no longer conformed to a Jewish-Gentile dichotomy/enmity paradigm, but transformed by the awareness we are being made into one body, each of us with differing gifts.

Using the imagery of body, Paul pushes the olive tree graft image radically further. Gentile Christians are not merely grafted into the main trunk of God’s covenant with Israel, but all Christians both form one body in Christ, collectively, and individually, each is part the whole like the arm is part of the whole body. We are both collectively and individually being redesigned in Christ to be connected to each other and incorporated into Christ starting with baptism, regardless of the backgrounds from which we have come.

The Holy Spirit gives each of us a variety of different gifts for us to offer to strengthen the whole community. Paul lists a sampling of these in verses 6-8. Note that the gifts listed here are focused not on the “institution” of the church, but on the core activities of the Christian community with each other and on mission in the world—proclaiming God’s living word, serving others, teaching, coaching, giving, leading, and offering mercy.

[Matthew 16:13-20.](#)

In a stronghold of Roman authority, Jesus asks the disciples whom others say he is. Peter confesses, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus then calls Peter and the church in which he will eventually lead to storm the gates of death, assured of victory, and to take authority to "bind and loose" on earth.

In the book of Daniel, the Son of Man is portrayed as a deliverer to come. There was wide speculation at this point in history about just who or what kind of person this might be. So Jesus wasn’t asking about what people were thinking about him, but rather about what Jewish people in this most Gentile-controlled of regions expected the Son of Man to be. They, of all people, had good reason to long for deliverance, and so for the coming of the Son of Man.

The answers to this question say a lot about the hopes and expectations of these people. That John the Baptist tops the list indicates just how expectant (and perhaps disappointed) they were. Others seemed to expect a prophet to return, either from heaven (Elijah) or from the grave (Jeremiah or another of the major prophets). Hear what that suggests: Only such an extraordinary intervention could generate true deliverance! Yet in just such an extraordinary intervention they were placing their hope.

Then, and only then, did Jesus ask the question about himself. “Who do you say I am?” Peter’s response is also telling. “You are the Christ, Son of the living God.” In other words, you are the promised deliverer. You are

what folks were looking for in the Son of Man, whether they understood that to be something like John the Baptist or one the prophets returned from the dead, but also much more.

Jesus doesn't congratulate anyone on their identification of the Son of Man. But Jesus does congratulate Peter on his identification of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. "Blessed are you, Simon, Jonah's son. Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven." And he goes on, "You are Peter (a stone) and on this rock (same word) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

It's a powerful image Jesus uses for the church in his blessing of Peter. Often, we think of Hades (the realm of the dead) being on the offensive to destroy us all. But here, Jesus reverses that. The church is storming Death's dominion, and Death's best defenses cannot stop us setting its captives free. What holy boldness Jesus intended for us to embody as his body!

And this confession and blessing of the church is also made at Caesarea Philippi, in the heart of Empire's strongest stronghold in all of Palestine." [Source](#)

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