

Proper 8 Cycle A RCL

Genesis 22:1-14

This difficult passage from the Elohist (E) is called the *Aqedah* “binding,” referring to the binding of Isaac as a sacrifice in 22:9. We do not know the location of the land of Moriah (verse 2), but tradition makes Zion (Jerusalem) the place where the sacrifice occurred. The story began as an etiological narrative, the story of how a particular shrine came into being and why certain offerings are made there. The words of the angel in 22:12, however, make it clear that E considers the issue to be the willingness of Abraham to follow God’s commands, however outrageous they might seem.

Psalm 13

Laments are prayers brought before God in the temple in which the petitioner asks for help with various problems. The petitioner’s problem in this psalm, as in so many laments, is that of enemies (verses 2, 4) who seek the destruction of the worshiper. The psalmist argues that the enemy’s continued victory over the psalmist puts God’s public reputation (Hebrew: *shem*, “name”) in jeopardy. In verse 6 the psalmist promises to pray a public *thanksgiving* psalm so that all can know that the Lord delivered him.

OR

Jeremiah 28:5-9

Hananiah prophesied to Jeremiah in August of 594 BCE (28:1) that the yoke of Babylon would be removed within two years and that Hananiah would be able to return the plunder Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple. Further, Jeconiah, son of the last rightful king Jehoiakim, would return with the exiles to reign. Our passage is Jeremiah’s reply. Jeremiah hopes that Hananiah’s prophecy will come true but points out that the prophets who came before them prophesied punishment for Judah. Jeremiah finds it unlikely that the time of trial will end so soon. Nevertheless, if the prophecy of peace comes true, then all will know that Hananiah was a prophet of the Lord.

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

This hymn celebrates God’s covenant with David (see 2 Samuel 7) within the context of God’s cosmic power. Rahab (89:10) designates a great sea monster whom Yahweh defeated at the creation (Job 9:13, 26:12; Isaiah 51:9), similar to or identical with Leviathan (Job 3:8, Psalm 74:14, Isaiah 27:1). Tabor (*Jebel el-Tur*, 89:12) is a high mountain (562 meters above sea level), overlooking the Plain of Jezreel, from which Deborah and Barak repelled the attempt of Sisera to occupy the valley (Judges 4:6). Hermon (*Jebel esh-Sheikh*, 89:12) in Syria rises 2814 meters above sea level, and snow may be seen on its top well into the late spring.

Romans 6:12-23

In the letter to the Romans, Paul hopes to enlist the Christians of the imperial capital in support of his proposed missionary journey to Spain (1:10-15; 15:22-33). To that end Paul must answer his critics who claim that he is a Christian libertine, *i. e.* someone who teaches that in Christ one is free from all the restrictions of the law. This charge is ticklish because Paul does indeed teach that being in Christ brings freedom from the law, but in this chapter he argues in two ways that such freedom does not lead to sin but to righteousness through faith. In 6:1-14 he argues that by

dying and with Christ (in baptism) we became dead to sin. In the second phase (6:15-23), Paul bases his argument on the relationship of master to slave. The one whom we obey is our master, whether sin or obedience (6:16). C. H. Dodd thought that “obedience” here was a scribal error for “righteousness,” but most researchers have agreed with Otto Michel that “obedience” here has a new meaning, the very opposite of obedience to the law of sin and death.

Matthew 10:34-42

The author derived verses 34-41 from the Q-source, *i. e.* the document of sayings common to Matthew and Luke. Verse 42 came from Mark 9:41. The difficult Greek expression “in the name of” (*eis onomon ...*) may correspond to Hebrew *leshem* which means something like “in the capacity of.” The follower of Jesus would recognize and play host to a prophet as a prophet and to a righteous person as a righteous person (10:41). That understanding would make sense of the next verse in which the hearer would give a child a drink of cold water *as a disciple*.

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