

Bible Study
Proper 5, Year C
June 5, 2016

[RCL] 1 Kings 17:17-24; Psalm 30; Galatians 1:11-24; Luke 7:11-17

1 Kings 17:17-24

Fleeing from the wrath of the wicked Ahab and Jezebel, the Prophet Elijah finds himself driven by the Lord to the home of a poor widow and her son. Elijah has already proven to the widow that God can provide food enough for her and her son, even though they only have a tiny amount of meal and oil. By God's own power, the Lord makes the meager provisions last far longer than they should and proves God's word spoken by the prophet. When the poor woman's son later dies, she expresses her grief and frustration by blaming her misfortune on Elijah's presence. Elijah offers no defense for himself or for God. Instead, he takes the child to the upper room and expresses his own frustration with the God who brought this upon them all. God proves faithful and answers Elijah's prayer. In doing so, God shows, in ways that seem impossible, that God does indeed care for the "widow and orphan," and confirms the faith the widow of Zarephath. Therefore, she responds, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth."

- Can we dare to be honest with God about how we feel?
- Might we be surprised at the way God responds?
- How will we respond in turn?

Psalm 30

The psalmist expresses joy in and gratitude to the Lord in response to some restoration that the Lord has wrought in the psalmist's life. The writer proclaims, Lord has "turned my morning into dancing" and "put off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy." Interestingly, the Psalmist seems to say that their sense of desolation was brought about by their own complacency: "While I felt secure, I said, 'I shall never be disturbed. You, Lord, with your favor, made me as strong as the mountains.' Then you hid your face, and I was filled with fear." In calling out to the Lord and appealing to God's mercy to restore them to spiritual life, the Psalmist is heard, and in relief is able to say, "His wrath endures but the twinkling of an eye, his favor for a lifetime."

- Does God "hide his face," or do we sometimes shut our eyes?
- What does this psalm say about God's presence even when God seems most absent?

Galatians 1:11-24

Whenever Paul gives his testimony, it is quite beautiful. But he never tells his story for its own sake; it always serves a purpose. Here, Paul uses the narrative of his spiritual journey to make two points. First, he is at pains to show the Galatians that adopting Jewish ways is not only unnecessary to follow Jesus, but also detrimental. Paul is urging the Galatians not to "regress" (so to speak, since this is a primarily Gentile audience). If Paul, who was as Jewish as they came, put away Jewish identity markers after his conversion, how much more should Gentiles not seek to become artificially Jewish? As Paul will later declare, there is no longer Jew or Gentile, but both are now one in Christ (3:28). The distinction is no longer relevant. The terms and conditions have been updated, and now Gentiles are eligible to receive the promise of Abraham. Second, Paul is defending his apostolicity and the validity of his preaching against the charges of those

who are misleading the Galatians. This is not about protecting his reputation; this is about the very nature of the Gospel itself. Ultimately, Paul, like a good pastor, is looking out for the well being of his flock, his spiritual children whom he loves.

- How did your walk with Jesus begin?
- What unnecessary burdens are we placing on ourselves in our walk with Jesus? On others?

Luke 7:11-17

It is evident that Luke sees, in this resuscitation by Jesus of a widow's son, an echo of Elijah's raising of a widow's son. Like the widow in 1 Kings, the people in the Gospel, when they see the wonder worked, affirm the legitimacy of Jesus' office: "A great prophet has risen among us!" Interestingly, Jesus does not pray to God to raise the boy, but instead merely commands the young man, "Rise!" In a way, Elijah himself is almost incidental to his miracle; it is really only the power of God doing the work. But Jesus speaks as if he himself has the power and authority to reverse death. Jesus is not incidental. He is not the instrument. He is no mere prophet. He is himself, to use his later words, "the God the living" (20:38).

- What else might this miracle say about who Jesus is what his Kingdom is like?
- Are there any areas of your life that you wish Jesus would revive?

Written by The Rev. Donald J. Griffin

The Rev. Donald J. Griffin grew up a cradle Episcopalian in the Dallas area; he first discerned a call to the priesthood when he was fourteen. Since then, Donald has sought to answer that call and follow the path he believes God has set for him. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in Religious Studies, minoring in Philosophy and History. It was there that he fell in love with his wife. Having entered the discernment process his senior year of college, Donald was granted postulancy shortly after graduation and entered Nashotah House for his seminary formation. Donald have worked as a counselor at our diocesan camp, a chaplain at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas (while completing CPE), and a seminary intern at Trinity Episcopal Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. Donald has become very interested in theology, the practice of pastoral ministry, and how the two intersect, particularly in the liturgy. Donald is looking forward to seeing where the Lord will lead him next.

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