



Readings for May 29, 2016

1 Kings 8:22-23, 41-43;
 Psalm 96:1-9;
 Galatians 1:1-12; Luke 7:1-10

A READING FROM THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. He said, "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart. Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name – for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm – when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built."

1 KINGS 8:22-23, 41-43

PSALM 96

- 1 Sing to the Lord a new song; * sing to the Lord, all the whole earth.
- 2 Sing to the Lord and bless his name; * proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare his glory among the nations * and his wonders among all peoples.
- 4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; * he is more to be feared than all gods.
- 5 As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; * but it is the Lord who made the heavens.
- 6 Oh, the majesty and magnificence of his presence! * Oh, the power and the splendour of his sanctuary!
- 7 Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples; * ascribe to the Lord honour and power.
- 8 Ascribe to the Lord the honour due his name; * bring offerings and come into his courts.
- 9 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; * let the whole earth tremble before him.

We worship you, God of glory, in the beauty of holiness, and we joyfully proclaim your just and righteous rule, established for all, through your Son Jesus Christ the Lord.

A READING FROM THE LETTER FROM PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Paul an apostle – sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead – and all the members of God's family who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different – gospel not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed! Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ. For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

GALATIANS 1:1-12

THE HOLY GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO LUKE

After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy of having you do this for him, for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us." And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

LUKE 7:1-10

When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

We live in exciting; often exhilarating; frequently confusing; and occasionally troubling times. A multitude of opinions accompany these times from all sides. And God has given us the minds to continually be thinking about what it all means and how we can best cope with it all. Coping with it all can be no small matter when we feel that so much is beyond our control or influence.

The question arises about where we are to turn for wisdom as we journey through life. Are we to find wisdom from science? Is it to be found in politics? Are those in the corporate sector in the know? How about those in public service and the healthcare professions? Or are we likely to find what we are looking for in shooting the breeze with friends at a BBQ? Certainly there is no shortage of people with various perspectives, insights and opinions.

It seems to me that there are some things to keep in mind as we seek better knowledge and wisdom. The first and most important is that God is the source of all true wisdom and knowledge. The second is that God does not keep all of that wisdom and knowledge locked up somewhere away from us. God shares that wisdom through God's people, through scripture and through history. Yes, one way God is alive to us is through other people. And some of these people — many of these people are Christians — and there are also many who do not profess to be Christians at all.

Some of you may have known or heard of Dr. John Morden. He was my Systematics professor in seminary and was very important in my theological education. He at one time was Dean of Theology at Huron College. I knew him as a kind, gentle man of deep faith.

Several years ago, I heard him give a commencement address for graduating theological students. In it, he made a most interesting declaration. He said that he had travelled a large part of the world in his very long career. He went on to say how in reflecting on his experiences, he could see that wherever he travelled, Christ had always been there ahead of him. Now he was not saying that churches could be found in most of these places. Nor was he saying that people who declare their faith in Christ are meeting him everywhere. Dr. Morden was referring to something deeper and more important.

He was pointing out that in the humanity he has encountered in the places he has visited — in the humanity of the local folk, he discovered the presence and influence of Christ alive and well. This was especially true in their expressions of love and compassion for others. Rather than focussing on the ways these folk's cultures differ from our own, John Morden looked beyond the culture to evidences of their deep love among one another right before his eyes.

Why do I mention this now? In today's Gospel we have a most interesting situation. Jesus is asked to heal a slave. And the person wanting the healing to take place is the owner of the ailing slave. So far so good. But then we come to find out that the one desiring the healing of his slave is not a Jew. He is a Roman Centurion. We do not hear the religion of the dying slave. We do come to hear a bit more about the Centurion, however. He apparently has looked kindly on his Jewish neighbours. He even built a synagog for them.

So we have this mighty Centurion humbly asking through other people for the Jesus he has heard of to heal his slave. And how does our Lord react? He indeed heals the slave. But there is more.

Christ tells it like it is by pointing out to say that he is extremely impressed with the faith of the Centurion. In fact, he had not previously run into such faith, in Israel. The Centurion was a man of love and of faith — a man of faith who had heard of Jesus, but had never met him. This story tells us much about how it is with Christ. But all of this becomes even more dramatic when we consider what a Centurion would normally have meant to the Jews of those days.

First of all, the Jews were a people under Roman occupation. The main enforcers of this occupation and the laws of Rome were the military. And key to the effectiveness of the soldiers was the Centurion. Each Centurion was selected for his intelligence and bravery. Each was the leader of 100 men. The local population had every right to despise any Centurion — for they were the enforcers of Roman will. Yet, the Jewish townsfolk took up this Centurion's compassionate desire for the healing of his slave. And to his credit the Centurion had personally been a positive force in this local Jewish community.

This situation was one example of God revealing God's wisdom through Christ. Artificial impediments and differences were put aside in the love of this slave and his master. The biggest advocates for the Centurion and his slave were the local Jews. This is how it is supposed to work — this is how it can work — this is how we are called to make it work even in today's world.

We live in God's world. God is not silent. God does not limit himself to influencing only certain peoples. All are God's children. All are loved by God. We as Christians acknowledge and celebrate the presence of Christ in the world through the Holy Spirit. We also celebrate the manifestations of Christ's love of people throughout the world.

As we journey through life it is well for us to know is that we are not alone. God is with us through his Holy Spirit sharing in what we experience. Christ also is ever with us as our source of God's wisdom and grace.

So keep in mind from today's Gospel reading how the Centurion was hesitant to approach Jesus on his own and how the Jewish townsfolk were more than willing to bring this Roman's request to Jesus. You see, Jesus is for all people. So it is to be with us. May we ever lovingly act in that knowledge with great thanks and great humility.