

still waters

home church studies

1 Samuel 2.1-10

[Worship]

1 Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory. 2 "There is no Holy One like the LORD, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. 3 Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed. 4 The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. 5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. 6 The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. 7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. 8 He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world. 9 "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail. 10 The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and exalt the power of his anointed."

Consider:

[Words]

The end-of-year readings for the gospel of Mark rely heavily on eschatological themes. Eschatological, or "final judgment," texts were always popular during times of severe persecution and oppression, in both Jewish and Christian circles. They provided hope for those experiencing persecution and reminded believers that suffering and evil, while mysteries, were not meaningless. Rather, the community was encouraged to remain faithful despite adversity, for God too shall remain faithful.... It is likely that at the time of the writing of Hebrews, the Christian community was truly expecting

Jesus' second coming, and thus the end of the world. Paul reminds them to observe the laws of God as revealed in Christ, now and "all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).



Though these expectations have changed, the texts still serve a valuable purpose. With the close of the liturgical year, next week the church prepares to celebrate Christ as king. Christ's kingdom is the beatitude kingdom, the upside-down kingdom where the last are first, where those who suffer for justice and righteousness will be comforted. It is a place where the community considers "how to provoke one another to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24); where we can "**all** enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19). No longer are women or other "impure" persons excluded from God's presence: In Jesus we are made one and we are all worthy. And Jesus himself emphasizes that it is not just our oppressive social structures that must be destroyed and rebuilt, but any religious ones too. No matter how glorious our church buildings, structures that exclude others "will all be thrown down" (Mark 13:2). Jesus assures us that the coming of the kingdom will truly bring cataclysmic changes, especially to structures of death that oppress and exclude those who seek justice, mercy, and love.

[Scripture]

Mark 13.1-8

1 As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" 2 Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down." 3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" 5 Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birthpangs.