



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 5.1-8 [Worship]

1 Give ear to my words, O LORD; give heed to my sighing. 2 Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray. 3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch. 4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil will not sojourn with you. 5 The boastful will not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. 6 You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful. 7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house, I will bow down toward your holy temple in awe of you. 8 Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.

Consider:

[Words]

In Galatians 2:15-21 Paul offers a classic statement about an alternative life that is lived out of God's limitless generosity for which we use the term "grace." The other readings may be taken as commentary on this contrast between a graced life and a life propelled and measured by self-securing.

The psalm voices a prayer for God's attentive protection against "boastful evil-doers" (5:5) who are "blood-thirsty and deceitful" (5:6) and counted as "my enemies" (5:8). As usual, the psalm provides no particulars about the social crisis reflected in the prayer. If we look for a set of particulars that fit this prayer, the narrative of 1 Kings 21 provides such a case. We may imagine Naboth, owner of a small plot of land that the king covets, as the petitioner in the psalm. And King Ahab, with his co-conspirator Jezebel, qualifies as "blood-thirsty and deceitful" evil-doers who are clearly adversaries of Naboth in their quest for his land

that eventually requires his life. Naboth himself does not pray in the narrative. But the subsequent intervention of Elijah the prophet indicates just such an advocacy for "your righteousness" in the face of usurpatious wickedness (Psalm 5:8). Thus the narrative of Naboth and the generic voice of the psalm give flesh to Paul's defining categories.

In the Luke's gospel, moreover, the "woman of the city who as a sinner" (7:37) acts with uncommon generosity toward Jesus, while the host Pharisee stands, with the self-securing, under Paul's indictment. The contrast is clear and complete: "You gave me no water for my feet ... you gave me no kiss ... you did not anoint my head with oil" (7:44-45). She is forgiven while the host receives nothing from Jesus. All of these texts witness to the summons put before us by the gospel, a choice between *self-securing* that brings death or *reliance upon God's generosity*. The psalmist prays and the woman performs. Both prayer and performance belong properly to the new life offered in God's goodness. - Walter Brueggemann

[Scripture]

Galatians 2.15-21

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. 17 But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! 18 But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. 19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; 20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Question:

Law keeping is always self-concerned and self-absorbed. As we discussed last week, a life lived well WITH Christ, is a life of outward worship (service), bringing pleasure to Him.

Are we currently living our own lives out of duty, or surrendered mercy-service to "unclean people," because Christ is worthy.

Also, read for yourself this week,

Luke 7.36-8.3 & 1 Kings 21.1-21a