



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 52

[Worship]

1 Why do you boast, O mighty one, of mischief done against the godly? All day long 2 you are plotting destruction. Your tongue is like a sharp razor, you worker of treachery. 3 You love evil more than good, and lying more than speaking the truth. Selah

4 You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue. 5 But God will break you down forever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living. Selah

6 The righteous will see, and fear, and will laugh at the evildoer, saying, 7 "See the one who would not take refuge in God, but trusted in abundant riches, and sought refuge in wealth!" 8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever. 9 I will thank you forever, because of what you have done. In the presence of the faithful I will proclaim your name, for it is good.

Consider:

[Words]

The focus of the gospel reading is the awareness that Mary of Bethany has chosen the good part, the one indispensable thing. She has chosen "the Chosen One." The accent is on Mary's utter devotion to Jesus, refusing every alternative or distraction. She is completely focused on the one who is indispensable for her life.

The lyrical affirmation of Paul affirms that the reality of Jesus, in whom "all things hold together," is the one thing needful for a full life. A proper engagement with Jesus is a life "holy and blameless and irreproachable" that is "steadfast in faith" (Colossians 1:22-23). Paul warns against "shifting from the hope promised by the gospel." The faithful refuse to hope in anything or anyone else.

Psalm 52 traces the sharp contrast between two ways of life. There are "boasters" who practice treachery, "love evil", and "trust in abundant riches" (verses 1-7). And the alternative, "the righteous," who trust singularly in God, obey the Torah, and see the foolishness of the boasters who try to save themselves (verses 6-9). Those who trust in

God's faithfulness are like "a green olive tree" that flourishes with much fruit; they end in much thanks.

The sketch of a faithful person runs with consistency from Mary in the gospel to the "holy and blameless" in the epistle to the "green olive tree" in the psalm. In each case, it is a fruitful life grounded in a single loyalty. The polemic of Amos is directed against those who have chosen foolishly and consequently live destructively. The Mary narrative identifies the Chosen One necessary to a viable future. "Steadfastness" is to settle for this single offer of a viable, well-ordered life.

Walter Bruggemann

[Scripture]

Colossians 1.15-28

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16 for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers--all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. 21 And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him-- 23 provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel. 24 I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. 25 I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26 the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.