

Sunday, August 7

Judges 11:1-11, 29-40 *“Father,” she said, “you have uttered a vow to the Lord; do to me as you have vowed, seeing that the Lord has vindicated you against your enemies, the Ammonites.”* (v.36 NJPS)

This is a long story, that ends with the father killing his only daughter and burning her as a sacrifice to the Lord because he made this poorly worded vow to sacrifice the first that comes out of his front door to meet him. Genius!! He could have said the first thing out of my barn. Or the first lamb in from pasture. Anyway, averting my eyes from the barbarity of the outcome, I am really struck by the daughter’s response. How does a young child understand such a situation? How did she know that a vow to the Lord was unbreakable?

This story makes me re-evaluate my understanding of a vow. I think of giving a life for a promise and I am overwhelmed by sadness. And then, I think of the cross—and know that I have a Lord who has done just that for me.

Psalms 66, 67; 2 Corinthians 11:21b-31; Mark 4:35-41

Monday, August 8

Psalms 89:1-18 *Righteousness and justice are the base of Your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness stand before you.* (v.14)

This psalm is like a creation story to me. A creation of the image of God. An image of not just power, but also love for His creation. Justice and righteousness are foundational. I want that not just in my life, but in the life of my society and culture. Isn’t that what we are working out now with issues of racism and equality. Are we not blessed to be Americans and living in a country that upholds the value of justice and liberty?

Please God, let people see your holy image as a guidepost and direction for how to live our lives together.

Judges 12:1-7; Acts 5:12-26; John 3:1-21

Tuesday, August 9

Judges 13:1-15 *An angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “You are barren and have borne no children; but you shall conceive and bear a son.”* (v.3)

This is an early story of a mother waiting a great while for the blessing of a child. But this is a child of promise from an angel of the Lord! I’m fascinated by the appearance of angels in the Bible. It is so supernatural and miraculous. Miraculous events described in the Bible identify acts of God working out His plan. Is there anything natural about a miracle? When I read this

story, I ask, “How is this possible?” Over time, I have lost a sense of difference between what is “natural” and what is “supernatural.” Is flying faster than the speed of sound natural? What is now possible, and surely more to come, courtesy of science and technology, continues at, well, a miraculous rate. Can we explain how the appearance of angels work? Of course not. But it happens. And I thank God for the assurance of His hand at work in my world.

Psalms 97, 99, 100; Acts 5:27-42; John 3:22-36

Wednesday, August 10

Psalm 101 *Each morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land, to rid the city of the Lord of all evildoers.* (v.8)

This psalm creates the impression of a king who is “electioneering” (in a way), as he sets the ground rules for a life in a *holy* city. This is coming from David, who knew a lot about right from wrong. As written, David includes elements that could serve as the basis for a personal oath of office. Expanding the idea, it points to basic requirements for what we now expect of a functioning civil society. For David, slander, deceit, and untruths were his reality as he worked to turn tribes into a kingdom.

Ethical behavior is very important to me, and so I endeavor to live a life that is blameless and trustworthy. The term “Judeo-Christian value” continues to provide an acceptable, political expression for an acknowledgment of certain moral truths that underpin our life together in this remarkable experiment called America. I hope and pray that we continue to be blessed with moral, ethical, and upstanding men and women to lead us forward from tribes to kingdom.

Judges 13:15-24; Psalm 109; Acts 6:1-15; John 4:1-26

Thursday, August 11

John 4:27-42 *They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”* (v.42 NRSV)

When I was young, people spoke about God to me; and, in my young, unquestioning way, I believed *them*. I was putting my trust in the people, the people doing the speaking. And if I wasn’t with them, I know that they prayed for me. So, believing based on trust is not a bad way to start.

But as time proceeded, I began to put my trust in what I was able to reason and understand from Scripture. Scripture now guides me in a life-long journey of seeking answers to my own questions. Now add in the spiritual nourishment of the Lord’s Supper received within an active faith community. That is a way for faith to grow and flourish.

“For we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world”—and so do I.

Judges 14:1-19; Psalm 105:1-22; Acts 6:15—7:16

Friday, August 12

Psalm 102 *...and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you endure;* (vv.25b-26a)

I like to read stories about the new discoveries science is making when they observe and photograph the far reaches of space. Space that seems empty, and yet when viewed over time, is revealed to be full of galaxies and stars. The photographs are spectacular. I have always felt that “science” reveals God and is not directly competing to replace God.

I am impressed by our modern understanding of the scale of things that we observe in nature. Space so vast it is measured in light-years and time is measured in the billions of years. How can someone so small be connected with power so great? I may not understand, but I have learned to have faith in God’s creation and the belief that as an individual I matter.

Judges 14:20—15:20; Acts 7:17-29; John 4:43-54

Saturday, August 13

John 5:1-18 *But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.”* (v.17)

God is forever filling His creation with love and activity. This is my personal invitation and cue to get busy. A world, so large and with so much to do, waiting for its laborers. Rationally, I think that my abilities and efforts are too few for the task. Faith-wise, I have relied upon promises made and kept by God. That is sufficient for me to continue in my way forward—stay active and focus on loving the creation revealed to me by Christ.

Judges 16:1-14; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; Acts 7:30-43

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