

Monday, April 17, 2017 - Day 106 – I Samuel 25-27, Psalm 88, Acts 2

The Goodwill of All People

What happens to a country when its prophet dies? The country may go into disarray. The country may find itself searching for its true identity. The country may mourn for years to come without knowing what it's mourning. The country may lose its voice. In today's readings we see Israel immediately after it loses its prophet.

In a time when America seems to have lost its vision, its voice, its identity as being the beacon of hope for those who are *the tired, the poor, the huddled masses*, the homeless and the tempest-tossed, we must ask, "Who holds America to be accountable to the natural rights of divine law, simply to love your neighbor as yourself?"

Perhaps the turmoil of our own country can be summed up in the words of Abigail, "Now therefore know this and consider what you should do; for evil had been decided against our master and against all his house; he is so ill natured that no one can speak to him." This is where we, as humankind, end up when we fail to provide hospitality to others. Currently, our country is not a beacon of hospitality that offers hope to visitors, strangers and the huddled masses. We need the wisdom of an Abigail. We need the intervention of an Abigail. In other words, we need a prophet to guide us to who we are to become both as a people and as a country.

Of course, today's readings also offer us a view that a leader needs to possess restraint. We see this when David spares Saul's life. This is the second time that David shows restraint in taking down Saul. This restraint is not out of cowardice or David's own inability to make a decision. This restraint comes from the central ideal of reconciliation. Reconciliation leads to the breaking down of barriers and might I say it, "Yes, walls." As children of God, we are not called to build walls. We are called to follow God and to be faithful to his call. In other words, David doesn't go rogue. He shows restraint and perhaps in the eyes of others, if he would have slayed Saul, then David may have been considered successful. However, in the words of Mother Theresa, "God does not require that we be successful only that we be faithful." David, at least at this point in his career, intrinsically understands that.

Now are we, as the speaker of Psalm 88 laments, "counted among those who go down to the Pit?" In other words, are we as a country going to Hell in a hand basket? The geo-political landscape looks mighty bleak. However, we are Christians. Christians possess hope. Christians follow Jesus. Therefore, our Way cannot be side tracked by government policies, which fails *to respect the dignity of every human being*. Through Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit we can live out our baptismal vows and accept the Holy Spirit into our hearts as *tongues of fire descend upon us*. We need to realize and accept that the divine presence is with us, among us.

Peter in the Acts of the Apostles is redeemed from his earlier denial of Jesus. He received the power of the Holy Spirit and is given the courage to speak and to live out

the life of Christ. In the words of William Law, “If we are to follow Christ, then it must be our common way of spending every day.” Peter, after Pentecost, proclaims Christ boldly. He goes out into the community with confidence to start building the kingdom of God here on Earth. He uses the Gospel to unite people – people of many different nations and languages. He doesn’t say you don’t belong. Peter doesn’t keep the gift of the Holy Spirit to himself. He shares it with the new converts and implores them when they ask him what they should do. He tells them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” In other words, Peter gives to the people what he himself has received. As a result, *with glad and generous hearts*, they praise God and have *the good will of all people*. Notice, Peter, the apostles, and the new converts praise God together and have the *good will of all people* – not just the people of their ethnic, geographic, socio-economic and cultural background. Yes, as Christians we have as our interest the goodwill of all people.

By The Rev. Tim Gavin