

Thursday, May 4, 2017 - Day 123 – I Kings 13-15, Psalm 102, Acts 17

1 Kings 13-15. In the first place, it was God's desire that the people of God would choose God to be their ruler. However, they wanted a human ruler over them like their contemporaries had. God warned them through Prophet Samuel that their wanting to have sovereigns ruled over them was a not a well-considered idea. It went against grain of theocracy. However, the Israelites wanted to be like their contemporaries with kings and kingdoms and with all its trappings. God finally relented to their wish. What followed was not pretty. After the first three kings, Saul, David and Solomon, Israel was divided into northern and southern kingdoms. The internecine wars between the kingdoms with the help of neighboring powers kept both kingdoms weak. The abuse of power by the royal families and the elite, the public worship of idols from top to bottom and the pervasive sexual immorality of the people all led to the continued deterioration and the final downfall of the Jewish nation state. They were God's chosen, but they didn't act like one. However, God is ever so merciful to receive them back into God's wings. Now we call ourselves the chosen ones, are we any different from the Israelites of old?

Psalm 102. The first half of this psalm is a heart-felt prayer of one who is falling apart. He wants to let know God how bad his situation is. In the second half the psalm, he tells how God is good. He hopes in the goodness of God in the end. Our prayers are truly conversations with a God who is near, dear, loving and caring. It's okay to express our dismay about our sense of abandonment. Our genuine conversation with God who listens and cares serves us to be therapeutic.

Acts. 17. This chapter gives us an account Paul's missionary journey through the Corinthian cities of Thessalonica, Berea and Athens. While in each of these places, Paul and his companions gained converts from both Jews and Greeks, they also experienced significant push back especially from the Jewish community.

Until Paul himself a devout Jew became a convert of the movement called 'the way', it was a Jewish sect, closed and exclusive group. Since his conversion, Paul was on fire, very passionate about his new faith. He was the one who saw first the universal appeal of Jesus' message and took it to the world. What used to be was tribal and insular, now with Paul it became global and cosmopolitan. Paul's unrelenting and enterprising missionary zeal made Christianity what it is now a global religion of over 2 billion people. He was a person on the move, for him church existed for mission.

By The Very Rev. Koshy Mathews