

Thursday, February 9, 2017 - Day 39 – Leviticus 7-9, Psalm 33, Mark 6

Chapter 7 is about the laws concerning the ritual sacrifices of guilt and peace offerings and Chapters 8 and 9 are about the rituals of hallowing and installing of priests. This was the first time I am reading these chapters in many years. When I read it before, I am sure, I hadn't paid much attention to it. Now, as I read it, I am really awed by the seriousness Israelites paid to these rituals. As a student of cultural anthropology, I can see how these rituals gave the Israelites their identity as a special people of God.

Rituals brought them together, made them as one people and helped them feel superior to their contemporaries. Over the years these rituals, like everything else, have also become more pedantic and lost their original life giving purpose. Today Christians believe that the blood and flesh sacrifices of Hebrew people are done away with the ultimate self-giving of Jesus as a one-time sacrifice for all people and for all time. However, this doesn't mean that there is no need for rituals anymore. It continues to serve the purpose of maintaining our identity as God's people.

Psalm 33 is a testimonial of someone who trusts in God who in love created this world and all that is in it. Rather than trusting in God, we often trust in the strength of the created and in ourselves. Without our trust in the loving and saving help of God, any of our international counsels and treaties, however good they may be, and any of our national defenses against our enemies, however strong that may be, are useless and are in vain.

Mark 6. This chapter gives us for our meditation several vignettes of acts of belief and unbelief. It starts with how Jesus could not do many deeds of power and authority in his hometown because of homefolk's unbelief and ends with Jesus healing many in other places because of those people's belief. Jesus' ministry took place under the suspicious and leery eyes of Herod who killed John, his cousin, for speaking truth to power. However, the unbelief of his own folks, outright rejection of hometown people, lingering doubts of his disciples or the constant danger of violence posed by civil authority were no match to prevent Jesus from doing his ministry of exercising his authority and bringing healing to common folks from the hinterlands. We read in this chapter how Jesus shared his authority over demons with his disciples to their utter dismay, he led his disciples in feeding the five thousand in a desert, he quieted down a storm for the benefit of his disciples, and he worked them in the healing of many. The theme that runs through all these vignettes is belief. Only those who believed and acted in faith received the blessings whether it is being released from the grips of personal or societal demons, or being fed abundantly in desert-like situations, or experiencing calmness in the midst of tempestuous conditions.

By The Very Rev. Koshy Mathews