

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost 28 Jun 2015

2 Samuel 1.1, 17-27

Psalm 130

2 Corinthians 8: 7-15

Mark 5:21-43

[Proper 8B/Ordinary 13B/Pentecost 5 June 28, 2015](#) Textweek

The readings today give us much to think about and to reflect upon; however, rather than centring on one particular theme they seem to offer us a number of openings for further exploration.

Let's look at four quite different openings from the readings; the first from the Old Testament reading.

David's "*lamentation over Saul and his son Jonathan*" evokes the tragedy of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*; like last week's episode it marks another turning point in the life and times of Israel.

Three times David laments "*How the mighty have fallen!*" and the movement from the anointing of the King, which we read two weeks ago, to the fall of the king we read today, is a dramatic reminder for us of life's changing fortunes.

And we do need such reminders, for in our day-to-day living we somehow claim an immunity from change and changing fortunes. We are vaccinated by insurance, habit and superannuation, and our immunity is further supported by ATMs and lines of credit so that we can, or think we can, sail through life's changing fortunes without impact or effect.

"*How the mighty have fallen!*" is not an encounter we intend or anticipate in our inner landscape and nor in the bubble of our immediate worldview; it is however an opening for us to look again at the part we play in the reality of life's changing fortunes.

The second opening, from the same reading, requires going beyond the traditional understanding of the scriptures; we so often overlook details and even context when we read within the tradition. A closer reading on the overall story of Saul, David and Jonathan, as we have been reading during Morning Prayer for a couple of weeks, provides a clear and deliberate interest and focus on the relationship of David and Jonathan.

In today's 'lament' we hear: "²³*Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely! In life and in death they were not divided*" and "²⁶*I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.*" when read within a more enlightened context the narrative speaks of a deep and intimate same-sex relationship.

And perhaps that insight provides an important opening for us; to see the scriptures unconfined by the doctrines, dogmas and directives of the tradition; to apprehend new possibilities and to appreciate that the words, and Word, within the bible rather than being confining and judgmental do in fact invite and encourage a fuller expression of life and love than that which the tradition has realized; to see that there is more to life than what we already see with our limited vision.

Now to our third 'opening' and we move to the second reading which speaks of Paul's encouragement to the church "*to excel also in this generous undertaking*".

And verse nine identifies Paul's reference point for his enlightened viewpoint, that being the self-giving of Christ: "*For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.*"

This third opening of today's readings is quite possibly the narrowest, comparable to the eye of a needle!

Following last week's AGM we might reflect on this reading and consider what it is that we, as the Church, excel in; and equally important set out to discover our "Christ' reference point.

During evening prayer this week we have been reading from the book of James, and much of what we've read parallels today's second reading:

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved. ¹⁷ Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸ In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.....

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."

These readings, for us, follow our AGM, as we look to the future, and to our future; so again we might take time to *consider what it is that we, as the Church, excel in; and equally important set out to discover our "Christ' reference point.*

Last, but not least, our fourth opening, this time it's from the gospel reading; and it is very much a post-Easter reflection for us to consider; and let's remember that the gospel narrative is illustrating 'for us' not 'to us'. As we follow the narrative we see that it takes place after a crossing: "*When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side*"; so we might become aware of crossings that we have made, or crossings that lie before us, consider also the crossings that come forth from our deepest desires, where are we being asked to crossover?

Following the actual storyline we might be able to see that the woman healed and Jarius' daughter are not different characters in different events, rather they are events created to illustrate and underline the gospel, the revealed enlightenment.

The intentionality of the narrative is clear in its deliberate construction.

The story opens with the scene that introduces us to Jarius; and he sets out the life challenge via his daughter; the gospel story then ends with the resolution on that initial life challenge.

The healing of the woman in the middle of this story is the underlining of the gospel message and it also serves another purpose; the resurrection of Jarius' daughter could be too supernatural for the initial audience to appreciate.

Even for us, the whole notion of resurrection is pushing the boundaries of belief, almost inviting unbelief!

However, to underline it a more common, more grounded and more realistic healing story is told.

The healing is accomplished and we are told "*Immediately her haemorrhage stopped*"; now we know that blood is symbolic of life and haemorrhaging is symbolically losing one's life.

So, this healing story, which interrupts the resurrection story, is a more believable version of resurrection; it is deliberately crafted to help us into a believable acceptance of the main story.

This fourth opening in the readings invites us into a further exploration of the reality of resurrection and a reality that is not an accomplishment of Jesus or by Jesus, but rather an illustration by Jesus as a reality for us.

And so, to finish off, four openings for you to explore;

"*How the mighty have fallen!*" an opening for us to look again at the part we play in the reality of life's changing fortunes.

"*Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.*" an invitation and encouragement to a fuller expression of life and love than that which the tradition has realized; an opening to seek more to life than what we already see with our limited vision.

"*to excel also in this generous undertaking*" prompts us to consider the undertaking we have as being church and how we might too excel.

And finally, "*Talitha cum,*" which means, "*Little girl, get up!*" – the reality of resurrection is a lived experience, we are asked to 'get up', to awake, to leave the tomb of this world and live a divine life.

The readings today give us much to think about and to reflect upon.