

Opening Prayer

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit that, as the Scriptures are read and discussed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

¹ Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh. ² For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The LORD said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel." ³ So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. ⁴ David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. ⁵ At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years. ⁹ David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inward. ¹⁰ And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.

Commentary

In this passage, we find Jerusalem still a stronghold for the Jebusites, the indigenous people of the land. With a secure water supply, the city was naturally well-suited to repulse an invasion. When the Jebusites learned of David's intention to capture the city, they scoffed that "even the blind and the lame will turn you back." David then turned back this taunt on the Jebusite guards, telling his men to go up to the aqueduct and attack the boastful soldiers. After David's forces overcame the city's defenses, he made Jerusalem his capital. He turned it into his own fortified city, and it became "the city of David," the unique possession of his dynasty.

Reflection

The Jebusites placed their security in material fortifications and were disappointed. In what ways have you or your family tried to establish security and stability on dubious foundations (such as a job, peer acceptance, or wealth)? What can be said from a biblical perspective of a nation that relies on arms and military means for security? In light of the biblical vision of turning swords into plowshares, are such methods effective?

2 Corinthians 12:2-10

² I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. ³ And I know that such a person--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows--⁴ was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. ⁵ On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. ⁶ But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, ⁷ even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. ⁸ Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, ⁹ but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Commentary

The Corinthian Christians were still very much geared toward evaluating one another and their teachers by worldly criteria, such as physical appearance, eloquence, esoteric knowledge, and flashy charismatic experience. They also tended to compete with one another for prominence within their community; and they expected their teachers to vie with one another based on such observable criteria. Paul did not let the word of God that he was called to reveal set him apart from other people. He found his worth, instead, in being a transparent vessel through which God's purpose could be seen and others could encounter and learn to trust in the boundless grace of God. Paul would not have anyone form an opinion of him based on reports of visions or mystical experiences. With Paul, what you see is what you get. He wanted to be valued only for the spirit of Christ in Him: If we do not see the fruits of the Spirit and the character of Christ in a person, no other religious claim is of any worth whatsoever.

Reflection

What do people see in you that reflects Christ? Is there a variance between what is seen and what actually is?

Mark 6:1-13

¹ He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ² On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! ³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ⁴ Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in

their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." ⁵ And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. ⁶ And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching. ⁷ He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸ He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹ but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰ He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹ If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." ¹² So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³ They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Commentary

This passage reports the continuing opposition Jesus faced from the very inception of his ministry. He had been opposed by "some of the scribes" when he pronounced the paralytic's sins forgiven (2:1-12) and by certain Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath (3:1-6). After slander spread to the effect that Jesus was in league with evil, his own family sought to restrain him to protect the honor of both himself and the family in the eyes of their neighbors. It is difficult to know why the people responded as they did. Some say that his earlier work as a craftsperson made it difficult for people who knew him to accept him now as a teacher of God's way. Why did the early church preserve these stories of sending and rejection? They prepared early Christians to encounter and cope with rejection of themselves and their message that they were sure to endure later in life.

Reflection

When has familiarity or a perceived lack of credentials prevented you from hearing a word of God from another person? When has that same familiarity or perceived lack of credentials kept you from being heard by others?

Responsive Psalter

From Psalm 48

¹ Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God.

² **His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,
is the joy of all the earth,**
Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.

³ **Within its citadels God
has shown himself a sure defense.**

⁴ Then the kings assembled,
they came on together.

- ⁵ **As soon as they saw it, they were astounded;
they were in panic, they took to flight;**
- ⁶ trembling took hold of them there,
pains as of a woman in labor,
- ⁷ **as when an east wind shatters
the ships of Tarshish.**
- ⁸ As we have heard, so have we seen
in the city of the LORD of hosts,
in the city of our God,
which God establishes forever. Selah
- ⁹ **We ponder your steadfast love, O God,
in the midst of your temple.**
- ¹⁰ Your name, O God,
like your praise, reaches to the ends of the earth.
Your right hand is filled with victory.
- ¹¹ **Let Mount Zion be glad,**
let the towns of Judah rejoice
because of your judgments.
- ¹² **Walk about Zion, go all around it,
count its towers,**
- ¹³ consider well its ramparts;
go through its citadels,
that you may tell the next generation
- ¹⁴ **that this is God, our God forever and ever.
He will be our guide forever.**

Closing Prayer

**Grant, O Lord, that what we have said with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and that what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**