

Bible Study for 9th September 2020

Preparation

In our Bible Study this week we will be reading the following lectionary readings set for Sunday (13th September):

- Exodus 14:19-31
- Psalm 114
- Romans 14:1-12
- Matthew 18:21-35

When exploring this week's readings try following this pattern:

Pray a simple prayer first. Perhaps use a prayer or a song you know well.

Read one of the readings

Pause

Reflect on the reading

Ask yourself

- How does this reading speak to my situation?
- What does the reading say to me about faith?
- How does the reading challenge me or comfort me?

If anything particular strikes you in the reading, try returning to it and reflecting again on that part of the reading.

After your reflection, you may wish to move on to another reading, but you don't have to look at them all.

When you have finished your reflections for the day, pray the final prayer:

Final Prayer: God of Moses and Paul and Peter, God of Miriam and Mary and Joanna, God of my journey, lead me as you have led your children since the Exodus in the ways of life, forgiveness and freedom

Amen.

If you want to read a short reflection please see below or, for a short YouTube reflection please go to [Introduction to Bible Study for Sunday 13th September](#)

Reflection

The Exodus reading continues the story of Moses,' relationship with God, the Israelites and Pharaoh.

After the Passover (reading set for last week) Moses, who has been allowed by Pharaoh to lead the people out of Egypt, is pursued by Pharaoh's army. The Egyptian king has decided to send this army to force the Israelites back into slavery. God has other ideas for the Israelite and, in the end, the Egyptian army is prevented from taking the Israelites as slaves. The army's fate is to drown in the Red Sea which overwhelms and destroys them.

The psalmist offers a reminder of the power of God to do whatever God wants with creation. God can make water where dry land was and dry land where all was water. God is able to act powerfully in nature and God's power is able to overwhelm human beings.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that this same powerful God who drowned an army, is discovered, in the New Testament, to be much more concerned about forgiveness. Both Romans and Matthew's Gospel talk about forgiveness, and they show that the real problem for God is that a forgiven person can choose to become less forgiving even though they have experienced mercy.

When the King of Egypt encounters God, through Moses, and he is asked to show mercy to the Israelites, he refuses to show mercy to the slaves and he tries to ignore God. Contrast this with King David, who also uses his power to cause death and get his own way. When David encounters God, through the Prophet Nathan, he realises what he has been doing, and he repents. David begins to understand the merciful nature of God.

Often in the Hebrew Scriptures it is as if God is just waiting to reveal God's own merciful nature. However, it is hard, almost impossible, to find someone to understand. Elsewhere in the Bible, Jonah wants to see God's vengeance on the people of Nineveh and he is confused, even angered, by God's mercy for a people who are sorry for their misconduct.

So, in response to Peter's question about how often he should forgive his brother, Jesus tells a parable about someone not willing to forgive, even though he has himself been forgiven. This failure to forgive someone which can be seen in someone who has been forgiven, is a disastrous response to God's mercy, and the perpetrator will be judged for it.

I find it helpful to reflect on this Sunday's readings in relation to Jesus' saying, elsewhere, "Judge not that ye be not judged".