

## **Weekly Reading – Monday, October 19, 2009**

We are looking here at the lessons from the Common Lectionary for Sunday, October 25, 2009. I'll take a look, as I have been doing, at both of the Old Testament choices, the semi-continuous presently from Job, and the typological from Jeremiah.

### **Job 42: 1 - 6, 10 - 17**

The fourth and concluding lesson in a series from this wonderful dramatic narrative. After God's speech, out of the whirlwind, last week, Job in the first part of this week's reading, answers. There's some debate among commentators as to whether Job's repentance is a grovel or more of a wake up. One thing for sure, Job's speech is much shorter than God's! The second part of the lesson, 10 - 17, describes the restoration of Job's fortunes and family: more livestock, more sons and more daughters. Is this a cheap "happy ending" tacked on to make it all come out well in the end? Or is there some deeper, and better, meaning? I've tended to think it rather stunning that after all Job has been through he is willing to re-engage with life, to risk farming and family once again.

### **Jeremiah 31: 7 - 9**

The typological Old Testament choice, chosen as a support for the gospel reading, comes from the portion of Jeremiah known as "The Book of Consolation." After the Exile, Jeremiah's words turn from unrelenting judgment to a new word, a word of hope and comfort. So the theme here is a regathering of the scattered people, "gathering them from the farthest parts of the earth," and in that great throng will be the blind and the lame. A restoration, that is, not merely of the strong and sure, of the quick and the pure, but of all people, the strong and the vulnerable, the able and the less or differently abled. Thus, Jeremiah prepares us to hear the story from the gospel of Bartimaeus.

### **Hebrews 7: 23 - 28**

A steady theme in this sermon-like epistle is the high priesthood of Jesus, which is contrasted with the repetitious and ineffective efforts of an earthly priestly cult. The author's point, it seems, is to encourage his readers to trust that in Jesus something decisive, effective and final has been accomplished. There is then no need for constant repetition of religious rites or for the anxiety that drives them. I would imagine that such texts would have been important for the Reformers as they critiqued the medieval church and the idea that the mass was an actual daily re-enactment of the death/sacrifice of Christ for our sins. The problem with such a focus and preoccupation is, in a way, that you are doing the justification/ forgiveness thing over and over and over, without ever getting on to the sanctification/ faithful living part.

### **Mark 10: 46 - 52**

This great, colorful and dramatic story concludes the middle section of Mark's gospel in which Jesus, on his way to Jerusalem and the cross, has taught his disciples what it means to follow him. On the last leg of the journey Jesus passes through Jericho where the shouts of

the blind beggar Bartimaeus bring down the walls created by the crowd and disciples who throng around Jesus and would "protect" him from irritating interruptions and people like Bartimaeus. Their wall aspect is re-enforced by the disciples rebuking Bartimaeus, telling him to quiet down. Poor disciples! When will they ever do anything right? Jesus summons Bartimaeus and then does something strange and amazing. He asks Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" Is it not obvious? Would it not be clear that a blind man would wish to see? Maybe, and maybe not. Bartimaeus says that he wants to "see again," which sounds a bit like saying he wants to re-engage in life again, step up from the roadside dust and join in. In this sense, there's a link to Job and the restoration of Job's life, farm and family. Must have taken some courage for both to try again, see again, live again. This section of Mark began in chapter seven with a healing of a blind man, and now it concludes in the same way. The implied question for the disciples, and for us, "Has our own blindness to the ways and purposes of God been overcome or healed? Do we see what God is doing in Jesus Christ?"