

Meditation “How The Mighty Have Fallen”

II Samuel 1:1, 17-27, II Corinthians 8:7-15, Mark 5: 21-43, Psalm 130 7-2-06

As I was sitting in the airport on my way back from Costa Mesa, California the other day, I was watching CNN. My flight had been delayed a little—there was something amiss with the plane. The cockpit had filled with smoke or something like it on its previous landing. So, while the mechanics were tinkering, instead of reading or thinking, I was watching the telly. There was a press conference or a photo op going on, I wasn't sure which. A fellow traveler was sitting next to me and, as he watched, he commented, “What a wonderful, strong country we live in. We have survived and continue to survive so much.” This was an interesting thought as we approached the Fourth of July, and it led to a brief but lively conversation.

Later, as I flew along, I thought of this morning's reading from the book of Samuel and those words, “How the mighty have fallen.” As we just read, this quote comes from a lamentation delivered by David upon the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. They had been “the mighty” and they had both been killed in battle. David was to become the next mighty one and, while being anointed by God as king, he was to prove that he, too, was a god with feet of clay, and that he would fall, at times, during his life.

This seems to happen to all who consider them selves to be the “mighty ones.” Somehow they stub their toes on what they perceive to be their power, trip and fall. This can be noted throughout history. Some die in battle, some are assassinated, others have opinion polls that plummet. It seems that those who have the most arrogance tumble the farthest.

To avoid taking such a tumble, we have been taught by Christ, how to live a simple, unassuming life as servants. Now, some folks do not like to think that they should live a life that serves others. They believe they are entitled to something better, to the respect and love of others, or at least to their allegiance without having to do anything. While it may appear that they have such a covenant, they often discover they do not and those who are mighty, in their own minds, fall.

Covenant was what Paul was writing about to his readers in that second letter to the Corinthians. He wrote a wonderful stewardship letter in our reading. We often kick around the definition of “stewardship” on the Finance Committee. But, here we have a clear expression of it. Paul was trying to get that church at Corinth to part with some of its money for a mission project. We can tell by his writing that he must have had as hard a time then, as we have now, in urging people to do good work with their dollars and cents. Funny, when I first typed this, I typed “sense” instead of “cents.” That must have been the Holy Spirit gliding over the keyboard. Perhaps, we need to push folks to consider what they can do best with their common sense before they are ready to invest their dollars and cents in any project.

Paul was trying to remind that church in Corinth that they did not live alone, there were others in this life they needed to pay attention to, they did not live in a vacuum. He was trying to give the church a good prod forward into being one that truly served others rather than just themselves. Needless to say, there is great wisdom in his words for any and every church.

In Mark, we see Jesus faithfully serving others as he made his way through a crowd. He was on his way to heal the daughter of one of the mighty in Jerusalem. But along the road he was literally touched by someone who needed him just as desperately as did Jairus' daughter. Jesus was touched by a common person who had suffered for a long, long time. A person who had no might but the strength of her faith, which healed her. In the words of an old song, with one touch, she was lifted “up from the common place into the rare.” In a simple, unassuming way she approached the man she had heard of and hoped with all her heart that she would be made whole again, through a touch he would not even feel. But, he felt the power leave him at her touch and he asked who had touched him. She confessed. Through that trusting touch he shared all he had with her in that instant. But he knew, as we all should,

that the more love and strength or power we give away, the more we find within ourselves. Our supply is never diminished if used in a proper way, if shared with others.

If we live honest decent lives following the way of Christ, we discover that we, as individuals, as a community and as a nation, do not flex our muscles of power to keep others in their places. Instead we learn to bend down to lift others up. We never lord it over others because we are so great or powerful or mighty. We are only that in our own minds, in our own press, in our own little ways. If we are to find and nourish peace in our time, we will not do it through the rattling of sabers, through thinly veiled threats, or through the occupation of other lands. No, we will do it by simply walking through the pressing crowd with grace and love trying to share all we have and all we are. We need to learn from the pages of our scriptures that the mighty that move without love and grace through this world are those who fall. While those, who walk along in their kind and quiet and loving ways, place their stamp on life for all eternity. The way we live and move and have our being is up to each of us. The wisest choice we, as Christians, can make is to follow in the footsteps of the one who has led so many so far. We can decide to follow Jesus, and once we truly do, there is no turning back. Amen