

For Sunday, June 7th, 2020 (Affirming Sunday?)

Matthew 28:16-20

W. F. Albright & C. S. Mann Commentary translation: The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them, and seeing him they worshipped him, though some were doubtful. Coming to them, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you; and I am with you always, to the end of the age."

An observation from Albright and Mann: *Matthew is the only gospel which has anything that can properly be called an ending.*

Question to ponder: What thoughts strike US immediately as we read this "conclusion" to Matthew's Gospel?

Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a ... The opening Story of Creation!

My own translation from the Hebrew version, done way back in my 2nd year in Theological College! In beginning created God the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness hovered over the deep, and the breath of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God spoke, "Let there be light!" and there was light. And God looked, and behold, it was good.

Psalm 8 (Mitchell Dahood's translation and commentary)

O Yahweh our Lord, how glorious is your name through all the earth! ... when I see your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you created, what is man that you should think of him, or the son of man that you should care for him? Yet you ... gave him dominion over the works of your hands, put all things at his feet.

Question to ponder: How did we move from a theology that speaks of God as Creator to one that sees humankind as sole beneficiary of Creation?

2 Corinthians 13:1-13 (The New Jerusalem Bible version)

This will be the third time I have confronted you. ...I gave you notice once, and now, though I am not with you, I give notice again: make sure you are in the faith. Examine yourselves! ... Try to grow perfect! Encourage one another, have a common mind, and live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. ... The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Some Thoughts? Note how Paul tries to balance admonition and censure, encouragement and challenge!

Some General Thoughts? Why has the lectionary shifted from the Gospel of John to that of Matthew?

Answer: The Lectionary tends to focus on the 3 “Synoptic” Gospels (the ones that are alike to each other) and just throws parts of John’s Gospel into each of the 3 years of the cycle, wherever a story seems to fit. So, we’ve enjoyed the stories in John’s Gospel over these post-Easter weeks, but now that Pentecost is behind us, the lectionary reverts to Matthew!

How do these Readings fit into a celebration of “Affirming Sunday”, which is what my focus would be for June 7th? Answer: they don’t, really! The Lectionary was created long before any thought was given to “Affirming Congregations” and Affirming Sunday! On the other hand, the Genesis story of creation in chapter 1 is a wonderful affirmation of God’s sovereignty and delight over ALL creation, while both Matthew’s Gospel and Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians open doors into possibilities of being oneself within the love of Jesus!

Good luck with your Conversations on Thursday morning!

And Thank You for inviting me to share in your reflection-time in this way. This will be my last effort for this season. It is time to take a break!

Blessings

Tony