

## **Bible Study Reflections for Sunday, May 31st, 2020 ... Pentecost!**

### **John 20:19-23 ... (From Raymond E. Brown's translation)**

*"Peace to you," he said to them again" As the Father has sent me, so do I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, with the words, "Receive a holy Spirit. If you forgive men's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you hold them, they are held fast."*

From Brown's Comments: in rabbinic Hebrew, "peace to you" became a standard greeting. However, within the early Christian community, it became a special greeting, used sparingly. In this moment, Jesus words are not a wish, but a statement of fact!

*One thought we might ponder: When we offer the gift of "peace" to each other, what are we offering: a wish or an affirmation ... or perhaps both?*

### **John 7:37-39 ... From Raymond E. Brown's translation)**

*If anyone thirst, let him come [to me]; and let him drink who believes in me. As the Scripture says, "From within him shall flow rivers of living water."*

From Brown's Comments:

"These four poetic lines have been the occasion of protracted discussion and immense literature. There are two basic problems of interpretation which must be discussed at length. First, who is the source of the rivers of living water, Jesus or the believer? ... Second, what passage of Scripture is cited in vs 38?"

You probably have already guessed that Brown then adds to the already "protracted discussion" with lengthy thoughts on each, but then offers the simple, but acceptable, conclusion that "him" is the "believer" and "living water" is yet another term for "The Spirit!"

*One thought: In the act of Confirmation (laying on of hands) does the one offering her/his confirmation of faith experience the gift of "living water"? Is there peace for this individual in this moment?*

### **Numbers 11:24-30 (From The New Jerusalem Bible)**

*Moses went out and told the people what Yahweh had said. Then he collected seventy of the people's elders and stationed them around the Tent. Yahweh descended in a cloud. He spoke to him [Moses] and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy*

*elders. When the spirit came on them they prophesied – but only once. Two men had stayed back in the camp; one was called Eldad and the other Medad. The spirit came down on them; though they had not gone to the Tent, their names were enrolled among the rest. These began to prophesy in the camp. A young man ran to tell Moses this. “Look,” he said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” Joshua son of Nun, who had served Moses since he was a boy, spoke up and said, “My lord Moses, stop them!” Moses replied, “Are you jealous on my account? If only all Yahweh’s people were prophets, and Yahweh had given them his spirit!” Moses then went back to the camp with the elders of Israel.*

**Question:** This story suggests a type of “confirmation” coming directly from God onto the chosen elders, including the two who have stayed in the encampment. Is the Christian rite of confirmation a celebration of Moses’ prayer that ALL might be given God’s spirit?

**Psalm 104:24-35 (From Mitchell Dahood’s Translation)**

*... (29 – 30) Should you turn your face away, they would expire; take back your spirit, they die, and return to their clay. Send forth your spirit, they are created anew, and you renew the surface of the land.*

**Dahood’s comments:**

- the common translation in vs 29b is “They are dismayed” but “*dismayed*” does not convey the absoluteness of what it would mean NOT to have God in one’s life.
- The origins of the thinking around “Spirit” are to be found in the Book of Job, with which the psalmist would have been familiar.

I think of the lyrics of a contemporary hymn: “We are in one in the spirit!” How do we LIVE a faith that celebrates this affirmation? How do we define what it means to be “one”? I know that some of our evangelical friends read this as meaning, we ALL have to be exactly alike, but this tends not to be a mantra within the United Church of Canada.