

Proper 12
Cycle C RCL

Hosea 1:2-10

Hosea 1:4 has God ordering Hosea to name his son Jezreel because of the “blood of Jezreel.” Jehu became Israel's king in 843 BCE after an especially bloody revolt against the house of King Ahab at Jezreel in 2 Kings 9-10. Clearly, the butchery was not forgotten almost a century later during Hosea's lifetime in the reign of Jehu's descendent Jeroboam II (ruled 786-746 BCE). Hosea 1:6,9 present unusual names for Hosea's other two children: Lo-ruhamah (1:6, “not pitied”) and Lo-ammi (1:9, “not my people”). Notice that the negative element *lo'* is missing from these same names in 2:1, so the naming may be something of a prophetic device to show the depth of the breach between God and Israel. Some commentators have seen a literal repudiation of God's giving the sacred name *ehyeh* (“I will be” or “I am”) to Moses in Exodus 3:14.. The command in 1:9 actually reads, “Call him Lo-ammi because *you* are not my people (*'attem lo' 'ammi*), and *I* am not (*ve'anoxi lo' 'ehyeh*) to/for you. (FLH)” Gomer, Hosea's harlot wife” was probably a cultic prostitute. Around the Baal temples where these prostitutes plied their trade, women were somewhat safer than they would be if they were simply on the street. In Hosea, Gomer represents the harlot Israel, the cultic prostitute, whoring after the Baals.

Psalm 85

This *community lament* appears to stem from the time of Judah's exile in Babylon and to express the hope that God will soon rescue the captives and establish them securely in their own land. Like the Second Isaiah, the psalmist expresses the belief that the divine judgment (exile) has brought Israel forgiveness of its sin. All that is left now is to call upon God for deliverance.

OR

Genesis 18:20-33

The crux of the Yahwist's story of Abraham's bargaining is verse 25b: “Shall the judge of all the earth not do justice?” The issue is not whether there is some magic number of righteous people necessary to save the city of Sodom but whether God might be so unjust as to destroy the righteous with the unrighteous. This question of the justice of God permeates the Hebrew scriptures and finds its fullest discussion in the books of Job and Ecclesiastes. The threatened destruction of the cities of the Plain, however, raises the issue in a particularly acute way: Does the God who has control of history act only out of coercive power or does he temper that power with equity? The author's answer seems to be that God acts equitably but that there is a point at which justice may have to override the claims of a few righteous people.

Psalm 138

Although *laments* are the most frequent form of psalm in our Psalter, the *thanksgivings* such as Psalm 138, which are based on the *laments*, are quite infrequent. Characteristic of a *thanksgiving* is that it picks up and repeats some of the original *lament* which the psalmist prayed to entice God (successfully) to relieve the psalmist's distress. We do not, however, see that feature in Psalm 138. *Laments* promise that the singer will tell of God's faithfulness and salvation to the congregation. Singing *thanksgivings* like today's psalm in the Temple was the way the psalmist kept that promise. *Thanksgivings* always contain specific reference to God's positive answer to the singer's plea, and we find that feature in verse 4.

Colossians 2:6-15

There is a strong similarity between the nature of the false teaching our author addresses here and that addressed by St. Paul in Galatians. In both writings the falsehoods of the opponents stem ultimately from the cosmic powers or *stoicheia* (vs. 8, Galatians 4:9). Circumcision was also a matter of concern

(vs. 11, Galatians 5:2-6) as was observance of a set religious calendar (Colossians 2:16, Galatians 4:10). There are, however, differences as well. A major difference is that our author regards circumcision as a positive spiritual reality much as did the authors of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah (Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6; Jeremiah 9:24) and as did the Rabbis, who decided that circumcision was not a mutilation of the flesh because it applied most properly to the human heart. The readers of Colossians have received this spiritual circumcision and need neither philosophy nor law for their salvation as the opponents wrongfully suggest.

Luke 11:1-13

Some commentators believe the form of the Lord's Prayer here is earlier than the form in Matthew 6:9-13. The two different forms, however, relate to the particular teaching about prayer each evangelist puts forward. For Matthew, the Lord's Prayer has mainly to do with forgiveness of others and sincerity of heart (Matthew 6:14-17). For the Gospel of Luke, the prayer has to do with trust in God and persistence in prayer (11:5-13). A most puzzling phrase is the request that God should give us today "our daily bread" in verse 3 (Matthew 6:11). The expression might best be rendered "our bread of tomorrow," which would make it a reference to the great meal the saints will enjoy in the kingdom of God. Luke's version connects God's forgiveness of our sins with our freeing others of "every obligation" to us (*panti ofeiloni*, vs. 4), a clear reference to the eschatological remission of debts at the last great Jubilee. (See Leviticus 25.)

© Fred L. Horton. All rights reserved.