

Proper 6
Cycle B RCL
Revised

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13

Gibeah (Tell el-Ful) is 5 km north of Jerusalem, well within the territory of Benjamin, Saul's tribe. Now that Dtr has established that God supports the institution of monarchy, it now falls to Samuel to make the monarchy pass from the hands of the smallest of the tribes to the large and influential tribe of Judah. There is some evidence that suggests Judah may have had kings before David, kings who probably reigned in Hebron. In our story God intervenes indirectly, as God usually does in Dtr's history, through the agency of a selected human being, most often a prophet. By choosing the youngest of the sons of Jesse, we also see God's work. The eldest (Eliab) would have been the presumptive choice. But the monarchy, flawed as it is, belongs to God.

Psalm 20

This psalm is a *royal psalm*, but there is scarce agreement about its setting. H. Gunkel thought it was a liturgy in the temple before the king went forth to war. B. Duhm thought that it was part of a coronation hymn. Recently, Gerstenberger has suggested that it had no setting at all in the king's court or in Jerusalem's temple. While the psalm shows elements of the trust psalms and pilgrimage psalms, the thought is most like the coronation in Psalm 2. The meaning of the word *Selah* at the end of verse 3 is unknown. It could be a performance notation of some kind.

OR

Ezekiel 17:22-24

This figure follows immediately upon a longer such figure (17:1-21) that promised destruction if Zedekiah, who fancied himself king in Jerusalem, broke the oath of allegiance he swore to Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE. Nevertheless, the prophet assures his listeners in 17:22-24 that against all likelihood, God would reestablish a messianic ruler over Jerusalem who would draw many nations to himself.

Psalm 92:1-4, 11-14

This is a personal *thanksgiving* that borrows heavily in verses 12-14 from the wisdom tradition in which personal righteousness and success in life are closely associated. The general nature of this thanksgiving made it possible at a later time to include it as a community prayer on the Sabbath as suggested in the later superscription. Nevertheless, the personal *lament* for salvation from personal enemies that preceded this prayer is transparent in verses 9-11. In general, thanksgivings were offered in the temple after a person had prayed a lament, received the requested deliverance, and then returned to the temple to offer thanksgiving.

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

The Corinthian Christians believed that death brought the liberation of the soul from the weight of the body, which Greek authors often compared to a kind of heavy clothing. The soul after death is, then, naked, devoid of the heavy covering of bodily mortality. Paul, on the other hand, believed in the resurrection of the body and urged his readers to think of the new kingdom as one

in which the present body of flesh would be “swallowed up by life” (verse 4). Paul presents a picture of the salvation of the whole person: body and soul.

Mark 4:26-34

Parables are extended similes, which often contain an element of surprise. The two in this passage conclude a long discourse that included several parables as well as Jesus’s declaration that “everything comes in parables” (4:11). Although the parables come from Israel’s wisdom tradition, which seeks to understand the meaning of human life and the best ways to live that life, Jesus restricts his use of parables to providing his hearers with images of the coming kingdom. In Mark’s Gospel, those hearers not only do not understand the parables, but in their hardness of heart, those hearers eventually seek the life of the one who gave them.

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