

Proper 5
Cycle C RCL

1 Kings 17:8-16 (17-24): Option 1

1 Kings 17:17-24: Option 2

The so-called Deuteronomistic Historian (often abbreviated Dtr), who is responsible for the great history that extends from Joshua through 2 Kings, often portrays prophets not only as bearers of the divine message but also as wonder-workers. Even within that context, however, the two stories in 1 Kings 17:8-24 are remarkable for having Elijah effect his life-saving miracles for a non-Israelite woman in Phoenician Zarepheth the very heart of Baal country and outside the land of Israel. A major question facing the first readers of Dtr was whether the God of Israel could also operate outside of the land of Israel and whether that God could provide for the necessities of everyday life as Baal was supposed to be able to do. This account answers both questions with a resounding “yes!” The story of Elijah’s student Elisha in 2 Kings 4:8-37 is similar to the story in 1 Kings 17:17-24 and may be another version of the same story.

Psalm 146 (with option 1)

Psalms 146-150 are all *hymns* that begin with the expression *hallelu-jah!* (“Praise the LORD!”) and may be part of a larger collection of hymns. Hymns typically celebrate the presence of the LORD in the Temple and ordinarily focus upon some particular aspect of God’s power and goodness. Here the focus is upon God’s defense of the poor and disenfranchised.

Psalm 30 (with option 2)

This *thanksgiving* psalm recapitulates the original lament which the psalmist prayed to ask for deliverance in verses 8-10. The danger from which he asked relief was the danger of death, expressed here in terms of descent into the underworld, Sheol. The deepest part of Sheol is called “the Pit” (*Abaddon*). Having been saved from death, the psalmist returns to the Temple to offer the promised sacrifice and public acclamation of God’s faithfulness.

Galatians 1:11-24

The Letter to the Galatians provides us this autobiographical note as part of Paul’s argument that he is a true apostle of Christ and that his non-legalistic understanding of the Christian faith is both safe and true. In the common Greek an *apostolos* was a legal agent of another. This understanding was taken over both by contemporary Aramaic (*shlixa’*) and Hebrew (*shaliach*), and so was available to Paul from many quarters. Paul’s apostleship is his authority to act for Christ, as Christ’s agent, in the affairs of the church.

Luke 7:11-17

This story is unique to Luke’s Gospel and foreshadows the resurrection by showing Christ’s power over death. The similarity to the story of Elijah healing the widow’s son are not accidental. (See above on 1 Kings 17:17-24.) Nain is identified with modern Nein near Nazareth. Later sources call it Naim which is Hebrew for “pleasant.”

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